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FRENCH INTELLECTUALS AND THE POLITICAL CRISIS

THE political maturity of the French people has long been a subject of wonder and often of envy for foreign countries in Western Europe. I remember of an uncle of mine who, with no pretension at all of belonging to cultured and politically well-informed circles, could predict with amazing accuracy the coming fall of the Ministry then in office. He knew what the stumbling block would be, and how it would all happen. He knew who would be called at the Elysée, and how the parties would be represented in the next *combinaison*. Yet, there was no special gift of foresight in him: he was the *Français moyen*, with all his shortcomings and lightheartedness Only, he was a shrewd and subtle *animal politicus*. He must have been very shrewd indeed, when one considers the long list of pre- or post-war Cabinets of the Third Republic.

The species is not extinct. It has multiplied vigorously, and these two or three years have brought to political awareness the last indifferent sages who might have till then peacefully remained tilling their garden. To-day, France is a wide camp of bustling political heroes, waging a merciless war of inflamed speeches and pathetic calls against each other. A vast crop of leaders have risen on the turbid mass of decaying parties, trying to instil new blood into a senile body, by making a thorough revision of the values of the past, and by emphasizing, in the minds of their supporters, the notion that they are badly and immediately wanted to save France from the abyss into which she is apparently doomed to fall. Each citizen, to whatever party he may belong, is thus cunningly or forcibly led to think that he cannot remain outside the fray, that he has to take sides, because not only his, but the permanent interests of the country are involved in the fact that his mere unit may break, to good or bad purpose, the fragile equilibrium of the forces in presence. Thus, the number of abstentionists has fallen very low in the last general election: the French have voted

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to the utmost of their possibilities—in some places, one goes so far as telling that even the dead have trooped to the booths: but this is another story!

So, the special gusto with which the *Français moyen faisait de la politique*, either to show he understood the game or to provide for himself and his family—pride or interest—has turned into a serious passion. Fear has crept into his heart, along with the feeling that since matters have become so serious, he has his word to say to it. No longer a joke enabling him to show his wit or his subtle comprehension of the state of affairs, but an utterance full of meaning and loaded with the threat of action. Though this new view of things had been brought about by degrees before February, 1934, yet the confused night of the 6th February, when an organized, madly whirling about mob, tried vainly to storm the *Chambre des Députés*, marks the beginning of a new era.

After the first days of bewilderment and suspense, the French —nobody can deny they are quick—understood the points at issue. The Right realized they had lost a unique opportunity of seizing the power ; the Left understood they had had a narrow escape, and that another mistake would be their ruin. Both wings realized the dire necessity of union, because the people, generally speaking, had had enough of parleying and of the silly *jeu de massacre* which irresponsible politicians had so far been indulging in. Without entering into too many details, my purpose is to examine briefly to what extent, and how, the French ' intellectuals ' have played a part in the grouping of forces which has altogether changed the political visage of my country.

Whether the poet and the man of letters should or not interfere in human affairs is a question which, in France, has long been solved by facts. From time to time, an idle journalist tries to revive an idle discussion. The Encyclopédistes of the eighteenth century may well smile in the dust of their graves. Not to speak of Lamartine, Hugo, Taine or Renan. The prestige of literary or scientific glory enables a man to offer an opinion on a subject which is not specifically his. The French have, to this day, always had a high respect for *l'intelligence* taken in its wide sense. If such a man, whose qualifications are culture, knowledge, and disinterestedness, bends his thoughts this way, he has a better chance of being right than I who know much less. At least, one

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listens to him. And if that man happens to profess a credo dear to the heart of the people, he at once becomes popular, not a hero in the Carlyle sense, but reverenced and loved, because he has somehow increased the faith of the simple man in the justice of his cause. But things have gone further than that. Even hardened politicians themselves, untouched till then by any appeal to reason, and drifting along their career as they would along a profitable stream with occasional scuffles now and then, have lately been taught not to dabble any more in serious matters. The pervading force of reason has at last touched them, though, it must be said, through the channel of fear.

The multiplicity of parties in the *Chambre des Députés*, though it was well in harmony with our dislike for the absolute, had its disadvantages on the practical field of government. Cabinets toppled down like houses of cards. Untiringly re-built, untiringly thrown down. The impression was the political game would have no end, as a game. No reform in keeping with the doctrine of any party was possible. No party was powerful enough to enforce anything. And yet, there had been a so-called majority of the Left, which, by a strange mystery of the political world, could only produce and support a government of the Right. The electoral alliance of the Socialists and the Radicals (The famous *Cartel des Gauches*) was unable to prove efficient on the governmental plane. The Radicals were reluctant, either to enact a real democratic policy, or to support a still more unbearable reactionary one. From the purely practical point of view, the system was a failure. But, incredible to say, this fact was a glaring truth for everybody in France, except for politicians themselves. It took about two years of desultory experience to bring it home to them.

A deep and pungent desire for something new and efficient rose and spread in the masses. It seemed as if the frames of the parties would split under the pressure of the facts. The first symptom was the neo-socialist scission, started by Marquet and Déat—the latter, it must be noticed, a professor of philosophy. They reproached the Socialist party with its age-long abstention from government ; since it was very improbable they would ever hold a majority in Parliament, they thus condemned themselves to a futile inaction, while reforms were badly wanted. Better it was then in their eyes to delay the impossible application of a

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Socialist plan of reforms, and to follow a course of reasonable improvements, suitable to occasion. They contended for an effective union, made necessary by the urgency of the present and coming difficulties. The irony is their appeal to union and action should have ended then in the formation of a schismatic and almost still-born party.

This happened before the *6 Février*. Confusion was at its highest. But somehow, the lesson of the non-conformist socialists was not lost. It was a lesson given by that vulgar form of intelligence called common sense to the dryness of doctrine and the imperviousness of passion. It soon gained credit among the cultured and reflective part of the country, and many professors in secondary schools for example gave, if not their unconditional adhesion, at least their entire spiritual approval. Then came the famous night. The Stavisky affair, which was nothing more than a very commonplace swindle, had engrossed for a few weeks the whole political world. Names were circulated of compromised deputies ; the amount of the swindling was enormously exaggerated ; Stavisky himself stood as a kind of genius—nothing was omitted to enrage a public opinion which had become by that time very touchy. The scandal was exploited not only against the government, but against Parliament itself. The fury of the mob was such, that had they reached the *Chambres des Députés* there would have been nothing short of a slaughter.

The news of the riot fell on the *province* like thunder. People realized that the parliamentary system and democracy had had a narrow escape. They might have been blotted out. The coming to Paris on the next day of Président Doumergue with his smile, lulled for a time the now widely awake fear of the population. It was high time to organize some sort of resistance against the now plainly unveiled enemy: fascism.

I am trying to be as impartial as possible ; yet I don't write the word without any misgiving. The Right, as a whole, except a few madcaps, dislike being called fascists. Their propaganda slogan—*ordre, autorité, nation*—proves nothing. It is easily answered with a knowing sneer that they want order to their profit, authority for themselves, and, as to the nation, it is only meant there to appeal to the patriotic pride of any Frenchman. A spiritual swindle, so to speak, based on the deeply-rooted love

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of the French for their country, urged by the pretence that the upper classes alone can understand and defend the true interests of France.

The first answer to the rioters of the *6 Février* was the general strike of the following Monday. In a few days a wave of indignation had swept over the whole country. The strike was indeed general, including a vast number of government servants, all the elementary school masters, and an impressive majority of secondary teachers. It showed to the Right that the fruit was not yet ripe and that such methods were abhorrent to the people. On the other hand, it showed to the Left their unsuspected power of resistance, and what they could do if only they were organized. The situation was now cleared up: as it seems to be always the case with France, only the terrible imminence of danger can hush the egotistical need of personal liberty, amounting often to incoherent independence, and bind the individuals to some sort of common action. Here, the beneficent part played by the ' intellectuals ' cannot be over-estimated.

The process started by the creation of the ' *Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels Antifascistes* ' (commonly known as *Vigilance*) under the effective presidency of three Professors of European fame: Alain, Rivet, Langevin. None of them could be suspected of anti-patriotism, each having done well enough during the war, Langevin in particular, the inventor of a method of detection by sound, used in the submarine war. The aim of *Vigilance* was to group around the Parisian nucleus of anti-fascist intellectuals all the spiritual forces of the country, and to undertake at once a common action, apart from any political label, which would bar the way to fascism, either plainly avowed or cunningly disguised. A bulletin was issued, subscriptions were collected, provincial committees were formed, and in two months' time there was enough money and good-will to make of the bulletin a permanent fixture, to organize meetings and lectures, to get into touch with workers' organizations, and participate at large in any demonstration with any political group of people rising against the common enemy. Those positive results surprised the organizers themselves, who knew what a difficult task it is to avert from the course of their common duties men who are as a rule reluctant to undertake anything outside the sphere of their usual activities. *Vigilance*, by the end of 1935, numbered about 6000 members:

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they were mainly teachers in elementary or secondary schools, University Professors, barristers, engineers, doctors and so on, not to speak of many names already famous in literature, art, or science. The first stage of the propaganda was negative, or rather destructive. Fascism, under all its possible forms, was submitted to a sharp analysis ; its methods were widely advertised ; its aims revealed, its chiefs unmasked, its chances of success fairly appreciated. Pamphlets were published dealing with the different factious ' *ligues* ' (among which the *Croix de Feu* stands supreme) denouncing the military character of their organization, giving full particulars of the sources from which they received their funds, in brief, thoroughly examining the home and foreign policy which the establishment of fascism in France would involve. The tone of that propaganda literature was the more impressive as it was serious and even serene, not in the least appealing to the demagogic instincts of the crowd. The pamphlets were written by men accustomed to serious thinking and critical methods. Nothing of the kind had ever been seen in France—on such a large scale. It bore fruit.

The second step to take was to gain a decisive influence on the political world itself. It was more difficult, and yet there again, positive results were brought about by the active section of Paris. Nothing could deter them from the task they had undertaken, which was to facilitate and make good a rapprochement of the democratic parties. They urged the necessity of their agreeing on some positive plan of reforms which could be immediately made legal after the success (they had no doubt about it) of the Left at the forthcoming general election. But this time, the electoral alliance *must* not end in the fiasco of the last legislature. It must be clearly stated that promises should be kept, that the unity of action should be preserved. Let the program be a minimum, but let it be something upon which all will agree. The three Left parties, the Communists, the Socialists and the Radicals, were thus persuaded to elaborate that common program which alone could save the situation, and which the whole country was now awaiting. Thus was launched the idea of the *Front Populaire*, many months before the general election, with ample time to smooth angles and to ripen all over the country. Of course, I do not assume that the *Front Populaire* was solely achieved by *Vigilance*: but their moral influence did much to accelerate the

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process, and when, on the 14th of July, 1935, Prof. Langevin took the oath on the *Place de la Bastille*, he was as much acclaimed by the thousands of people who had taken part in the manifestation as was M. Léon Blum himself.

Looking back on these eventful last two years, another striking feature of the struggle between the conflicting tendencies of democracy and fascism is the part played by intellectuals in the press. This was, and still is, a time for weeklies. The daily paper prints too fast, it can only afford news unrolling at a terrific speed, a thin broth of doctrine for the early breakfast—just enough to satisfy one with the thought that things are going on as ever—but it cannot offer a coherent image of the world, not even a historically true account of what has happened yesterday. The weekly has more elbow room, and besides can pretend to be critical. Whether it be true or not—that's according to the point of view from which one looks at it—that the French mind likes to be puzzled and excited by a serious, logical, and even abstruse concatenation of ideas, the fact is that the background of clever gossip used as a foil by the weekly to set off the biting gravity of the leading-articles was no longer the essential part of the journal. The editors, usually powerful either in politics or finance, endeavoured to focus the interest on the critical standpoint by attracting to them the best writers they could muster. Thus, the weekly essays on political, social or economical questions offered ample matter for reflection. Useless to say, they were biased even to unbearable partiality according to the shade of the journal. But strong arguments go home, or at least have a disturbing influence on the mind, however fallacious they may be. 'There's some reason in what he says!' thinks the citizen in *Julius Cæsar*, after having heard Antony's speech. The convinced strengthen their creed, the hesitating are troubled, and the die-hard on the opposite bank grow furious. The Right knew very well what they were doing when, some years ago, they launched *Candide* and *Gringoire*. It is enough to say that three or four hundred thousand copies were soon sold every week. That stupendous success showed the way to their opponents. Soon after came *Marianne*, a symbolic title, standing for democratic liberties, and last year only, *Vendredi*, created by young Left intellectuals like André Chamson, Jean Guéhenno and Cassou, who considered it their duty to stand publicly for their ideas and diffuse them at large, with the same rather depressing methods

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of modern publicity. A fierce war was thus waged between the best pens and the most acute brains of the present time in France. Men like Mauriac and Gide themselves broke lances for their respective ideals. And England has surely not forgotten the despicable, though brilliant pamphlets of the once novelist, now regular contributor to *Gringoire*, Henri Béraud, whose base satire in many cases amounting to libel, hardly belongs to literature at all, but can be wickedly harmful.

Apart from the ' big four ' just mentioned, belonging to no party nominally, there is a swarm of weekly periodicals of less importance though equally spirited. They are solely the organs of a league or of a party. The intellectual character of their articles may be very low, and they hardly deserve mention in this essay. Quite apart from them stands the *Canard Enchainé*, with a long tradition of independence and an inexhaustible stock of wit. The *Canard Enchainé* is thoroughly French as I dare say *Punch* is genuinely English. But except a few cartoons, it seems to me *Punch* has now become at once dull and innocuous. Not so with the *Canard*. This small-sized paper, entirely self-supporting (there is no room for publicity in its four pages) is probably unique in Europe. The usual form of its humour is to take the counterpart of truth, or to present and comment it in so absurd a way, that it is flung back right into your teeth and forces you to laugh at its very absurdity. The *Canard Enchainé* mercilessly punctures the swollen bladders of arch-profiteers, informs the public of the crooked and secret designs of a lot of professional scallywags swaggering on the political stage, and stands as the living proof that *le ridicule tue*. It goes without saying that the *Canard* is a staunch supported of Left ideals, inasmuch as they are the last refuge of the dignity of man.

Thus it appears that the French intellectuals have all been more or less called upon by circumstances to play a part in the present political crisis. Just like the rest of France, they are, roughly speaking, divided into two camps. On the Right, stand nearly all the ' white beards ' of the French Academy, made famous by the cartoons of Jean Effel in *Marianne* and the *Canard*, a few catholics, the contributors to old conservative reviews, and some turn-coats (the fiercest, as it should be) finding it more comfortable to feather their nest than to starve for their ideal. They are those who, October last, gave their moral support to the

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Ethiopian campaign in a famous manifesto extolling the civilizing power of modern armament, those who, a few weeks ago, offered a sword of honour to the cadets of the Alcazar, and who, no doubt, are sorely grieved by the present confinement of Charles Maurras. Opposite, may be counted all those who constitute the living force of France, young writers and artists as opposed to the old fogeys, men like Gide, Julien Benda and Jules Romains belonging to a previous generation, those who follow in the wake of Romain Rolland and Alain, the huge mass of elementary school-masters, strongly united by the ties of their Syndicate, an impressive number of secondary teachers (the supporters of *Vigilance*), last, but not the least, many University Professors, like Langevin, Rivet, Mme. Joliot-Curie and so on, whose prestige is enhanced because of their unmistakable disinterestedness. A few minds, more sanguine and lovers of the absolute, have given their intellectual, and even effective, adhesion to communism (André Malraux, Aragon, and most of the surrealists), but the majority is simply attached to truth and democratic liberties. They rise against the *bourrage de crâne* (I wish I could find an equivalent in English), from whatever quarter of the horizon it may come, leading to the unavoidable slaughters of the next ' war which will end wars,' and they stand for an ideal of generosity and general human welfare.

If that is to be ' revolutionary,' I for myself, willingly accept to be termed thus. Such ' revolutionaries ' refuse to believe in the inevitability of war, refuse to serve consciously the cause of vested personal interests beneficial to the happy few and detrimental to the many, refuse to mingle the interests of iron-masters with those of the country, and the ideals of *L'Echo de Paris* with those of civilization. They still believe in the necessity of some elementary human rights, the right to education for all, freedom of thought, the sacredness of human life, and the right for everybody to be happy in this ' vale of tears.' That is why, under the complexity of the attitudes, there is a unity of hopes and fears in most of them. For the time being, in spite of the many reserves they might make, the hopes of such men are embodied in the endeavours of the Blum government towards more justice and dignity, and they help to the best of their abilities, through speech and pen, for the successful furthering of the *expérience*.

HENRI FLUCHERE.

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THE SWALLOW'S EGG

NOTES ON CONTEMPORARY ART.

'A swallow let fall an egg into the mouth of his mother and she conceived.'

IN the present welter of controversy as to what an artist is or is not, how he should or should not go about his job, it seems necessary to remind ourselves that 'self-expression,' the war-cry of every practitioner of the arts nowadays, can never by itself completely fill the bill. It is in any case an ambiguous phrase, for either artists have been expressing themselves at all times, or else, in the sense in which it is often used, they can never do so under any circumstances. A piece of work only attains to the level of art when the workman, no matter how individual and even bizarre his methods may be, expresses something greater than himself, the terms of reference for which are outside the personal life. In the presence of such work the spectator is led into a hierarchy where the ordinary accidents of existence are no longer decisive. He becomes related to the totality of experience, the common heritage of the society of which he is a part. It may seem platitudinous to insist once again on these simple facts, but in face of the eclecticism which is such a characteristic feature of much modern art, they are very generally neglected.

There is a story summarized by the quotation introducing these notes, that was supposed to account for the miraculous origin of Sie, ancestor of the Chang dynasty, rulers in China about the year 1687 B.C.[1] Because of this tradition which inspired his subjects with a proper sense of awe, the Chinese emperor was literally regarded as the Son of Heaven and could therefore act as intermediary between the sky and the people. Whatever were the psychological causes that interacted to give rise to such a belief, the point to consider is, that it permeated the minds conscious

[1]W. J. Perry: *The Primordial Ocean.*

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and unconscious of the people as a whole. It united the life of the community, related the individual to a reality outside himself and in general determined his attitude to the world.

Now in one respect the function of the artist in society is not dissimilar to that of the heirs of Sie, inasmuch as he too fulfils the role of intermediary. The artist mediates, on the one hand, between the individual and the ends a culture has formulated and aspires to ; on the other, he gives symbolic utterance to motives and purposes that work beneath the common surface of life. Though this is no doubt an over-simplified account of the matter, it is essential to emphasize this aspect of art ; for we have grown so used to the genuine artist being misunderstood, reviled or ignored by his public, that this state of affairs is almost taken for granted as an unavoidable evil. Indeed it is assumed that the artist and the rest of society must needs inhabit two separate worlds.

Whenever the phrase ' modern,' or, more impressive still, ' modernist ' art, is resorted to for the purpose of describing this or that painting or collection of artworks, it is often a question of some delicacy to ascertain what, precisely, this is intended to signify. If, for example, ' The Bathers ' by Seurat and a canvas by Salvador Dali entitled ' Crâne atmosphérique sodomisant un piano à queu ' are both examples of modern art in Europe, it is plain that something very odd must have happened to European society in the interval that separates these two remarkable works. Seurat, for all his revolutionary methods, is in the tradition of painting that began with the Renaissance. Seurat and Cézanne severally came to the conclusion that you could do nothing more with the spectrum palette than the Impressionists had done. No road led any further in that direction. They therefore dispensed with light and shadow and concentrated on structural design. Nobody liked it much at first, but eventually it was realized that these artists were on the right track, that they were re-asserting plastic values that had long been lost sight of. They particularly influenced a young man who had just arrived in Paris from Barcelona, called Picasso, and who was later in the course of his many adventures to develop their ideas in a way peculiarly his own. The activities of Cézanne, Seurat and their disciples, and the experiments of Picasso in the first decade of the present

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century, suggested the singular notion afterwards celebrated by the late T. E. Hulme, that Europe was in for a *Classical Revival.*

As long ago as 1912 Roger Fry, in defending the Post-Impressionists, drew attention to the ' markedly Classic spirit of their work,'[1] and there is no doubt that such painting with its concentration on formal values and its air of dispassionateness, can be said in certain ways to be informed by a classical spirit. But the term Classical Revival should mean something more than a reaction on the part of a few artists against a decadent Romanticism. One should expect, if such an event were to happen, that this art reflected a particular attitude of mind that was not only peculiar to the artist and perhaps a handful of his admirers, but had grown out of, and represented in important respects, a special kind of life to which a whole society subscribed. If this be so, it will be seen that our modern artist cannot in any real sense be ' classical ' at all. And of the heralded ' revival,' it hardly needs pointing out at this date, very little has come, in spite of Picasso, Derain, Brancusi, Braque and our own Messrs. Wyndham Lewis and Dobson.

Although the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the birth of the art-for-art's-sake slogan, and was occasionally roused out of its complacency by the fashionable game of shocking the bourgeois, it was still possible for the artist to be an integral part of the world in which he lived. There is nothing in the work of a Pissarro or a Gauguin even to suggest that a break had occurred in the continuity of the European tradition. It was not generally felt that a deep rift was widening in the unity of art and life. Not until the first decade of the present century was it apparent that something very extraordinary was happening everywhere. Only then, when Picasso was painting his ' L'Arlequin ' in 1909, were a number of people amazed to find that the world was no longer the familiar place to which they were accustomed. And this was not in the first place because Picasso had suddenly begun to see objects in terms of cubes, cylinders and triangles, because he was departing from factual reality, but because, before he could re-organize his own reality in terms of paint, he had first to *disintegrate.* Deliberately, and at times with a certain brutal

[1] *Vision and Design.*

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violence, he set about to disintegrate not only the accepted cultural values, but also the entire structure of the sensible world. Whether or no he was aware of the cause of this psychological necessity doesn't particularly matter. In a recent interview Picasso is reported as observing concerning his own work: 'Chez moi, un tableau est une somme de destructions.'[1] However that may be, what he consciously did was to search for organic structure, for fresh colour harmonies, for new dispositions of mass, rhythms in line and so on. And it is no secret that the then newly discovered territory of Negro art had a determining influence on his explorations. The chief result, however, of all this was that a Picasso picture became a highly complex system of finely balanced tensions. But Picasso was not alone in these experiments. Matisse, quite independently, was aiming at a simplicity that would be capable of expressing the revelations of 'the innocent eye.' And both these artists, Picasso especially, exhibit so remarkable a technical virtuosity that any criticism of incompetence in their actual workmanship must be dismissed as demonstrably absurd.

But it is safe to say that no other painter before Picasso felt compelled to compose his pictures out of an aggregation of destructions. The 'Bols et Flacon' (1908) and the 'Portrait of Henry Kahnweiler' symbolize the break in continuity and announce in unmistakable accents the henceforward increasing dichotomy in the modern soul. Once this is recognized it is obviously beside the point to discuss the 'classic spirit' of Picasso's work. It may be true, as Mr. Wilenski suggests,[2] that Picasso's motto should be 'Summa ars est celare pictorem,' but this does not really help to make clear the peculiar significance of this artist's achievement.

In considering the development of contemporary art, it is well to bear in mind that a psychological necessity forced Picasso on the hazardous road he has travelled with such admirable courage ever since. It is not germane to the purpose of this essay to discuss the conjunction and interaction of causes that brought about the radical shift in emphasis in cultural values during the past hundred-and-fifty years. We need only note here that, when the changed

[1] *Cahiers D'Art*: Picasso number.
[2] R. H. Wilenski: *The Modern Movement in Art.*

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direction of civilization is accompanied by so serious a deterioration in the spiritual life as has occurred in Europe, the artist is bound to become separated from his fellow men. He is left behind, or in front, according to the way you look at it. The split or conflict that takes place in him is personal, that is, it may simply be due to an accident of circumstances in his private history, but it will also be general in the sense of reflecting the larger problem of civilization. The unravelling of this psychological nexus can provide important clues for the purpose of defining this situation. Only in a limited way, however, will such researches be able to influence our judgment upon it.

The psychologist, when he attempts to account for the characteristic features of modern art, *via* the method of analysis of motivation, is apt to be betrayed into serious miscalculations. For example, in discussing the principle of stylization in primitive and modern art, an eminent doctor quite rightly notes certain psychological tendencies, such as selective emphasis of details, simplification and repetition of form. He then proceeds to define stylization as a psychological process: ' In short, by stylization we mean the modification of pictures of objects from the external world in accordance with certain internal dispositions of the psychic receptor apparatus, in such a way that the final representation is a compromise formation between the object represented and the physic dispositions just mentioned.'[1] Now the point is, that such a definition could cover all artistic activity. For no artist has ever yet succeeded in putting the visible world on his canvas *exactly as it is* ; and if he could succeed, it wouldn't be art. Stylization is merely one method among many of rendering a *conceptual* image of life. Nevertheless, the psychologist has no hesitation in characterizing this method as ' regressive,' thereby implying a value judgment, inasmuch as for him ' regressive ' means a check in development, a harking back to primary archaic tendencies of our psychic equipment that should have been outgrown. It is therefore no matter for surprise that the psychologist deplores the fact that ' adults of cultivated races derive æsthetic satisfaction from such things and that *technically well equipped artists should fall back* on such modes of expression '[1] (my italics).

[1]E. Kretschmer: *A Textbook of Medical Psychology*, p. 66.

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The reply is, that *e.g.* the cave drawings of Altamira reveal so rare a technical excellence, that a modern artist can spend his time in worse ways than by having a good look at them. But progress in art as well as in life means for the psychologist an ever stricter approximation to ' Reality,' though what the precise nature of that reality may be, other than a clinical rule-of-thumb measure, has thus far been a question that it has been imprudent to inquire into too closely. In spite of these limitations that are inherent in the psychological approach, the doctor does, alas! with good reason, observe that this kind of art is not produced in a healthy civilization, and that it is bound to leave the great mass of people unaffected. He would, however, have been nearer the mark to say that this kind of art *in our civilization* inevitably leaves the great mass of people unaffected, not because the art has ' regressive tendencies,' but because the psychic condition of the people is in confusion.

On this unfortunate state of affairs the doctor seeks to throw light by comparing the psychology of the schizophrene with that of the modern artist. In an ' expressionist ' picture (all ' modernist ' art appears to be ' expressionism ' for Dr. Kretschmer), ' the centre of consciousness is occupied by the sphairal images, which are catathymic, asyntactical and chaotic.'[2] This results in a tendency to approximate or split up concrete objects into geometrical figures, triangles, squares, rhomboids, circles, etc., or to express ideas and sensations only in lines, curves and spots with the help of strong colour effects. And this is precisely what you would and do find in the productions of persons suffering from schizophrenia, persons, that is, in whose personality the emotional, thought and motor processes are split up and in conflict. Such persons are unable to adjust themselves to ' reality,' and, as far as the psychologist is concerned, a great proportion of modern art has on the same principle a poor ' reality content.' From this it should be clear what the psychologist has in mind by this term ; and it is the very last thing that can be of use in a criterion of art.

I have been at some pains to examine the psychological approach for two reasons: firstly, because in point-of-fact a corre-

[1]*Ibid*, p. 67.
[2]*Ibid*, p. 101.

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lation can be established between certain tendencies in modern art, tendencies particularly associated with the name of Picasso, and a sick condition of the modern soul. Which, however, is a very different thing from saying that a cubist painting has a poor 'reality content,' with its implied criticism of 'regression.' Secondly, because of the growth of a movement, that in principle is based on certain notorious formulas out of the psychologist's laboratory. I refer, of course, to the Surrealist movement. But before I go on to discuss the Surrealists, it is necessary to take another look at the activities of Picasso, than who no other single artist has had a more insistent influence on the course of contemporary art. In the first decade of this century Picasso, as we have seen, became aware of what M. André Breton calls 'the treason of customary appearances,'[1] and proceeded to disintegrate and re-organize the physical world on his canvases in a way that symbolized the disintegration of spiritual values in Europe. For the artist himself this was no doubt a means of salvation, and it most certainly had a stimulating and, indeed, regenerating effect on the development of art in general. So great was the impact of his genius on his fellow-artists that in a short time the number of his imitators was legion. Since those days he has originated at least half-a-dozen schools of painting. But Picasso is a law unto himself. He exhausts the potentialities of a theory almost as soon as he has invented it. But he is never at a loss for a new path to explore. Yet in spite of the soaring prices his work commands in the art stock market, it would be true to say that it leaves the great mass of people unaffected. There are no indications that with the advent of Picasso the neo-classical age is only just round the corner.

It is not for nothing that the modern artist chooses to be eclectic. It is not for nothing that he has picked up hints from Africa, from China, from the Aztecs and Oceania. The ancient sculptors of Easter island can teach him a thing or two about plastic form that have hardly been recognized in the West at any time. But the fresh impetus these studies gave to sculpture and painting, will in itself avail very little in the future. No art can survive in a vacuum. Sooner or later it will wither if it loses

[1] André Breton: *What is Surrealism?*

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contact with the dynamic forces that determine the forms of a culture. The art of Picasso has not ceased to do this. On the contrary, it is still so vitally in contact, that it has succeeded in making the conflict articulate, and, incidentally, in expressing the modern dilemma that is making it increasingly difficult for his successors to produce art at all.

In the last five years Picasso has ceased to paint so-called abstract pictures. Indeed, abstract painting as such has always been a meaningless term for him. ' Il n'y a pas d'art abstrait,' he says himself, ' il faut toujours commencer par quelque chose. On peut ensuite enlever toute apparence de réalité. Il n'y a plus de danger, car l'idée d'objet a laissé une empreinte ineffaçable.'[1] But the process of disintegration has not by any means abated: ' les destructions ' go on apace. His recent circus and bullfight paintings (1933-35) are a strictly ordered integration of fragments of dissociated experience.[2] A rational harmonious whole is built out of confusion, but one in which the tension in which the modern mind precariously trembles, is accentuated to the breaking-point. In some the bulls and horses take on grotesque contorted human shapes, as if they were dim half-remembered figures out of a legend or a fairy tale. And that is indeed what they are, and why they make such an instantaneous appeal to the imagination. It is as though they communicated directly with the unconscious memory of the spectator. Picasso contrives to represent motion and immobility, conflict and harmony, impulse and reason at one and the same time. No doubt all great painting does this to a greater or lesser extent. But the modern sensibility of Picasso, modern in the sense of being exposed and completely alive to the salient influences of his time, achieves this by quite other means than, for instance, Goya when he etched the Tauromaquia or painted the Seres Fantásticos. Yet Goya was an innovator in some respects as great as Picasso. Indeed he may be called the first of the moderns, and some of his experiments anticipate the developments at the close of the nineteenth century. But in Goya's day, for

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[1] *Cahiers D'Art*: Picasso number.

[2] At the opening of the Picasso exhibition in Barcelona this year Sr. Sabartés remarked: ' Picasso construye. Eso es. Construye el mundo de la realidad sacado de la eternidad de sus sueños.'

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all his biting satire, his diabolism and the sense of an inscrutable mystery brooding over a great deal of his work, life was still a unified whole. In spite of wars, poverty, bad government, a decadent court, in spite of all the evils of an age that was unmistakably on the decline, there was no inherent opposition between life and art ; there was no discordance in the natural rhythms of men's life and those imposed on him through his own invention. But if Goya was the first of the moderns, it seems Picasso will be the last.[1] At least I doubt whether much more can be done along the lines of disintegration. You cannot continue to make private universes out of the dissociated fragments of experience and let the different organs of the human body act separately in a kind of secret drama of their own, without in the long run being defeated by the effort. And there are signs that the effort is exhausting itself. For in the newest school of art, or at least in the work of those men who have been much in the limelight of late, it is evident that, whatever they may owe to Picasso (and like everyone else they owe a great deal), the disintegration and conflict are finding expression in a very different way.

The Surrealists, however, are not a school. They do not profess to have invented a new system of æsthetics, and they do not practise a new theory of art. At least, that is not what they are after in the first instance. They aim in the first place at bringing about a regeneration in life, in the personal life, and in the life of society. And they hope to do this by attempting to resolve the contradictions that at present exist between the conscious and the unconscious, the dream and waking life. Of all the movements that were born in the hectic days after the war, ' Surrealism,' writes Mr. David Gascoyne, ' is the only one still alive to-day, and that is because it is fundamentally a revolution of ideas and not of the forms of expressing them.'[2] Though it may well be asked if there ever was a revolution of ideas worth its salt, that did not need new forms for their expression! However, whether radical or no, the surrealist revolution has by this time become eminently respectable. Its devotees are well received

[1]It is significant that recently Picasso has more and more frequently appeared publicly in company of the Surrealists.

[2]David Gascoyne: *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, p. 34.

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in Mayfair, and you could not long ago see records of their activities, thanks to the well advertised exhibition this summer, in the Movietone News. Without doubt the shivers in the intellectual atmosphere that thirty-seven years ago so disturbed Lautréamont, patron saint of the movement, are now convulsing Europe from Bucharest to London and from Stockholm to the Canary Islands.

Although he will admit that at present his notions are still caviare to the general,[1] the Surrealist envisages a state of things when his experience will be shared by everybody, when painting and poetry will be done by all, not just a few, when the artist will be an integral part of a society at last freed from its shackles. At the moment, unfortunately, we haven't got as far as that yet, and it is still not entirely clear how the Surrealist proposes to practise his new way of life. It is true that on the opening day of the Surrealist exhibition Salvador Dali mounted the platform to deliver an oration dressed in a diver's suit and accompanied by two Borzoi dogs. But the audience, the as yet hide-bound audience, did not appreciate the gravity of the gesture. They appreciated it even less when, it being a very hot day, Dali to prevent himself choking, was forced to unscrew the helmet of his suit, and finish his address in, what must have been, a deplorable state of unresolved contradiction between the conscious and the unconscious! The audience, in short, was highly amused.

Nevertheless a painting by Dali or Chirico or Tanguy is not by any means a laughing matter. In spite of the fact that such things as talent, skill, technique are relatively unimportant to the Surrealist, it is evident that these men are unusually accomplished craftsmen. But it is equally clear that with the establishment of Surrealism the expected *Classical Revival* stands exposed as a chimera, or rather, has revealed its proper character. With Dali and Chirico to begin with there is a return to descriptive art ; and once more every picture, by methods that are not essentially different from those of the pre-Raphaelites, tells a story. Klee and Miró, in their own way, celebrate a sort of lyrical return to the fantasy life of the nursery. In either case such work is about as foreign to the spirit of the classical artist as it could well

[1] *vide* Salvador Dali: 'Les Eaux où nous nageons.' *Cahiers D'Art*, 5-6.

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be. As for Dali, so unrevolutionary is his technique, even when he is being most ' paranoiac,' that his pictures would not by any means be out of place in the Academy, though no doubt the Academy committee would rather stand on its head in public rather than allow one inside the walls of Burlington House. He himself defines painting as ' hand-done colour " photography " of " concrete " irrationality and of the imaginative world in general,' a definition which, although it raises all the old questions without settling any new ones, yet gives some general indication of his method of procedure. It would not, however, prepare the unwary spectator for such an ingeniously monstrous canvas as the ' Spectre du Sex-Appeal ' (1933), or the pathetic ' Bureaucrâte moyen atmosphéricocéphale en attitude de traire du lait d'une harpe crânienne.' It is proof of the authenticity of Dali's art, whatever may be said of his paranoiac-critical method,[1] that it does convince through the urgency of the vision that is being communicated. The spectator need not stop to inquire why the paunchy ' Bureaucrâte,' with a sort of cone-shaped bulge at the back of his head, should be sitting rather mournfully in his chemise and suspenders on the smooth sun-baked roofs against a background of hills that are poignantly evocative of Spain, manipulating a huge bony object (the sexual symbolism is too obvious to need detailed description) in a manner depicted by the title. There is no problem here because the picture has its own logic and, like all fantasy, it reaches the spectator's unconscious mind by a short-hand method, absorbing him unresisting into the circles of its secret dream-world. And although the catathymic nature of the artist's vision may be of primary importance to the psychologist on the hunt for motives, its effect depends entirely on the imaginative skill with which the vision has been rendered. Obsessions have permanent interest only when they have been transmuted into art, *i.e.* when they have been released from their

[1] ' I believe the moment is at hand when, by a paranoiac and active advance of the mind, it will be possible to systematize confusion and thus help to discredit completely the world of reality . . . Paranoia uses the external world in order to assert its dominating idea and has the disturbing characteristic of making others accept this idea's reality.' *La Femme Visible* (1930).

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particular context and take their place in a system of reality that is external to the individual. And when Dali doesn't achieve this level, his obsessions, however horrific and accurately presented, are merely boring.[1] So far from, as M. Breton declares, that with the coming of Surrealist art and Dali in particular, ' it is perhaps the first time that the mental windows have been opened wide, so that one can feel oneself gliding up towards the sky's wide trap,'[2] the Surrealist artist surrounds himself with seriously cramping limitations. For the deliberate exploitation of the unconscious unrelated to any ulterior scheme, always leads back to the few dominating impulses in the human make-up. And the symbolism in which they are expressed, however ' marvellous ' at first sight, is apt to become monotonous once the ticks have been recognized. It is useless therefore, to refer as proof of the validity of their aims, to Surrealists of old such as were Callot, Teniers, Pierre de l'Ancre, Hans Baldung, Ulrich Molitor, van den Gheyn, Goya, Blake, etc. The Surrealism of such a picture as ' The Temptation of St. Anthony ' by Breughel the elder is interesting precisely because of its relation to an explicit rational conception of life. The modern Surrealist, however, can with naïve optimism be content with the prospect of ' the mind, on finding itself withdrawn from all ideals . . . occupying itself with its own life, in which the attained and the desired no longer mutually exclude one another.'[3] It may be that such an activity has a private usefulness for those engaged in it, though the attained and the desired can be made to harmonize and reinforce one another in very different ways, as the history of every culture that has been directed to spiritual rather than material ends, abundantly shows. From this point-of-view the Surrealist line of attack, psychologically an intense ' interior boiling,' may be regarded as an heroic attempt to *liquidate* the past. Perhaps we have arrived at a stage in history when some kind of psychic liquidation (the word *atonement*

[1]Compare Goya's note to one of the Caprichos entitled ' El Sueño de la razon produce monstruos ': ' La fantasía abandonada de la razon, produce monstruos imposibles ; unido con ella es *madre de las Artes y origen de sus maravillas.*' (My italics).

[2]Breton: *What is Surrealism ?*

[3]*What is Surrealism ?*

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would, in fact, be more appropriate to convey the full meaning of the process) is essential before we can re-orientate ourselves and base life on new conceptions of value. *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, though it will assuredly reveal its sterility when accepted as an end in itself, may yet provide the necessary fermentation. If the service it is rendering, is in the revolution away from materialism, it will have proved its worth.

As an end in itself Surrealism, though in the course of the proceedings it may produce some choice works-of-art (as well as a lot of rubbish), will be sterile, because the mind simply cannot continue to occupy itself with its own life indefinitely. When you have wandered through those dead antique cities of Chirico, in which no man has ever set foot, with the headless woman sitting patiently in the empty square watched over from the shadows by the broken Roman statue stretching out plaintive arms, what then? When you feel yourself thoroughly liquidated on those infinite shores and desolate wastes that Tanguy paints so admirably, full of the bleached bones of whatever nameless creatures have perished there, looking a little like the animated pieces of a child's puzzle, what hope will you turn to then? It is a pure and arbitrary assumption that the marvellous pursued for its own sake is necessarily beautiful or even interesting.

But of course the Surrealist is aware of this dilemma. He has felt the need of a rational scheme external to himself to hang on to. And in that spirit of fantasy that he practises with such success, he has turned to the philosophy of dialectical materialism for a framework into which to fit his creed. Surrealism is essentially a revolution, and there is (or was) only one other revolution worthy of the name, at least one that aimed at, even if it has not altogether succeeded in, liquidating the past. And that is Communism. We are therefore invited to watch the melancholy spectacle of the surrealist and the communist uneasily trotting in double-harness. I am not here concerned to examine the pros and cons of the Communist system, nor is this the place to expose the fallacies of dialectical materialism ; but it must be plain that by its very nature this philosophy is antithetical to the ideals of liberty as envisaged by the Surrealist movement. One need only listen, to be sure of this, to the unconvincing apologetics of its spokesmen when trying to justify their position. It is no accident

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that Maiakovsky, the poet so much admired by the Surrealists, shot himself. Nor that of all the Surrealist groups in Europe the Russian is conspicuous only by its non-existence.

> ' A swallow let fall an egg into the mouth of his mother and she conceived.'

This sentence, when read by itself, would seem to possess that very ' marvellous ' quality and spirit of fantasy so dear to the Surrealist artist. There is one important difference, however. Taken in its context, it points to a rational belief in an ulterior purpose, shared by *an entire society*, in which the contradictions between the dream and waking life *are actually resolved*. All fantasy, or imaginative effort, ultimately springs from the unconscious levels of the mind. But only, as Goya said, when allied to Reason, *viz*. a spiritual order, will it become the mother of the Arts, and the source of all their marvels.

RICHARD MARCH.

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YEATS, SYNGE, IBSEN AND STRINDBERG

SYNGE, says Yeats, in his preface to *The Well of the Saints* (1905) ' preserves the integrity of art in an age of reasons and purposes ' ; and this antithesis between ' art ' and ' reasons and purposes ' underlies all Yeats's writings on the theatre and the whole of his literary criticism. These two quotations make his position clear.

> ' Symbols are the only things free enough from all bonds to speak of perfection.'
>
> ' The end of art is the ecstasy awakened by the presence before an everchanging mind of what is permanent in the world.'

Compare this with the opening paragraph of Strindberg's preface to *Lady Julia* (1888):

> ' Dramatic art, like other art in general, has long seemed to me a kind of *Biblia Pauperum*—a Bible in pictures for those who cannot read the written or printed word ; and the dramatic author a lay preacher who hawks about the ideas of his time in popular form—popular enough for the middle classes, who form the bulk of theatrical audiences, to grasp the nature of the subject without troubling their brains too much. The theatre, accordingly, has always been a board-school for the young, for the half-educated and for women . . . '

Can there be a truer, a more devastating account of the drama from Ibsen to the present day, than this? *The Doll's House*, *An Enemy of the People* (' To be the pioneer of unrecognized truths, and new and daring ways of thought '), *Widowers' Houses*, *Strife*, *The Rumour*, *The Dog Beneath the Skin*—there is no need to prolong the list: they are all lessons in the board-school ; and we are all, of course, board-school boys, and perhaps we are grateful for our lessons, only we don't want to hear them again.

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Strindberg goes still further. He says that ' The rudimentary and incompletely developed thought process which operates through the imagination appears to be developing into reflection, investigation and examination . . . the theatre, like religion, may be on the verge of being abandoned as a form which is dying out, and for the enjoyment of which we lack the necessary conditions ' ; and he claims no permanency for his play, but only that it does deal with contemporary ideas and situations, and deals with them in a form suited to a contemporary audience ; his reason for his technical experiments is ' our decreasing capacity for illusion ' ; and here his ideas about the theatre are in some ways like Yeats's. Both want simplicity, a small stage, a small theatre, a fit audience though few, and no fake realism, but there the resemblance ends, for Yeats wants verse, rhythmic speech, perhaps partly intoned, masks, music, symbols, stylized acting and stylized scenes ; Strindberg wants naturalism—no make-up : no footlights, in order to ' strengthen the actors' powers of mimicry by means of the face's chief asset—the play of the eyes ' : in a word, he wants ' to turn the stage into a room with the fourth wall missing.' The difference between Strindberg's attitude and Yeats's is perhaps best elucidated by this remark : ' In speaking of make-up I hardly dare hope to be listened to by the ladies, *who would rather look beautiful than natural* ' (italics mine). Yeats wants just the opposite, he wants them beautiful, though of course Deirdre and ' dim queens with frosted eyes ' are not what Strindberg (or the famous Zeigfeld) had in mind here.

Can these opposites be reconciled? Must the arts take refuge with Yeats in ' Primum Mobile, Supernal Eden, Yellow Rose over all,' or else submit to being merely useful, and turn pedagogue with Strindberg? And will Strindberg's depressing theories really adequately account for his own best work, or Ibsen's either? And are all our traditional critical preoccupations with permanent values in art really irrelevant nowadays? We might note in passing that Dr. Richards comes down on Strindberg's side of the fence, for the artist ' communicator '[1] is not much different from the artist pedagogue ; though no doubt the subconscious leaves a

[1] ' That was Communicator, a former Colonel. A disincarnated spirit.'

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loophole of escape—a loophole that Strindberg got through. Whether you can by painstakingly self-conscious contortions worm yourself out through it to the happy land of permanent values those best acquainted with surrealism can best judge: being exploded through it by the force of the divine afflatus, like William Blake, or Ben Bloom Elijah, ' at an angle of forty-five degrees like a shot off a shovel,' is of course another matter.

To return to our questions. I would not be regarded as sneering at Yeats's mysticism ; but mysticism is no doctrine for a dramatist ; you can't, for example, put the experience which is the core of the *Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey* on the stage, or in any literary form which is not intended for private consumption. The position is put plainly by Synge, in his note-books (1908):

> ' For a long time I have felt that Poetry roughly is of two kinds, the poetry of real life—the poetry of Burns and Shakespeare and Villon, and the poetry of a land of fancy—the poetry of Spenser and Keats and Ronsard. That is obvious enough, but what is highest in poetry is always reached where the dreamer is leaning out to reality, or where the man of real life is lifted out of it . . . '

I think Synge in *The Playboy* achieved, in a minor way, this ' poetry of real life.' His methods, and the foundation of his style are well enough known, and need no discussion here. The point is that he was well aware that he was seizing the last chance of producing such a work. The ' criterion for the arts ' he believed was their ' compatibility with the outside world and the peasants or people who live near it ' ; and the peasants he wrote about were at once good material and a good audience because of ' the *richness* of their nature, a thing that is priceless beyond words.' This ' richness ' was the heritage of the past ; it was vanishing then, it has quite vanished now ; unless you consider A.A. road signs printed in Gaelic symbols of a healthy national culture. Nothing is more remarkable about the Irish literary movement than the way in which, in its best writers, the passion of nationality was united with a passion for art. Synge wrote *The Playboy*, he says, ' without caring to think . . . whether it would be held to have, or not to have, a purpose.' His plays, and the poetry of

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Yeats, have the flavour of a national culture, without any of the provincialism which usually attends it. Synge's work is of course limited in its appeal; and the style he formed is not a fertile source of inspiration; his solution of the problems which faced him is a personal one, of little general validity: but the perfection of his form does preserve the permanent values he admired. His limitations are due to social conditions, not to the deficiencies of his genius, and his localized perfection stands for qualities which are nowhere to be found in the works of his fellow-countryman Shaw, who remains provincial in spite of *premières* in all the best capitals in Europe.

One of the most striking qualities of the drama of Ibsen and Strindberg (and of Shaw and Galsworthy and Toller and many others) is its antiseptic, delocalized, universal flavour. Perhaps antiseptic is the wrong word for Ibsen, who moves in a kind of bourgeois fug; we smell cigar-smoke and rum punch in *Hedda Gabler*, and *An Enemy of the People* exhales the anonymous, centrally-heated, dust and disinfectant odours of municipal buildings. Strindberg smells of sanitary death. We don't bathe in reeking wounds, but we are aware all the time of iodine and chloroform and the surgeon's knife. One must of course remember that one is dealing with translations; but one feels all the time that the most important works of these men are their prose plays—the ones which have fewest irrational characteristics, and whose background is most ordinary, most like the real life we know. Undoubtedly this kind of drama has its advantages. It's much easier for an English company to put on *Hedda Gabler*, for example, than *The Playboy*; and it's much easier for an English audience to understand the Norwegian than the Irishman. There are many reasons for this. Some can be found in Strindberg's 'board-school' theories, but the most important one, I think, is to be found in this profound phrase of Yeats's, when he says that Synge was not interested in any 'excitement of the will in the presence of attainable advantages.' The more one thinks about this remark, the more it seems to explain. It is a perfect summary of the *Enemy of the People* kind of play—and how many of these there are! It accounts perfectly for the difference between Corneille and Racine—though it is important to distinguish between Corneille's 'attainable advantages' and those of the modern left-

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wingers ; and it accounts for Auden's ' Repent, unite, act.'

Does it account for Strindberg? I think not, altogether. There is, I believe, more of permanency in his work, because he does base his conflicts on persons, instead of on social theories ; and for him there is no attainable advantage, except death. He has a kind of clinical universality ; there is no political or class provinciality about him ; but of course he has in plays like *Lady Julia* no poetry, as Yeats would desire it ; and in the last resort naturalism must always seem comparatively insignificant beside poetic drama, because poetry is technically the better dramatic medium. Concentration is the essence of drama, and you can say more things at once in poetry than you can by any other method. This is well illustrated by plays like Toller's *Hoppla !* or his play about the German naval mutiny, where wide reference is attempted by means of stage machinery, with the result that we feel more is being crammed into the dramatic form than it can bear. The whole of German ' Expressionism ' was nothing more than a confession of the failure of all normal literary means of expression.

There seems little hope that any popular drama based on permanent values can be written now. (If you take exception to the idea of permanent values, substitute for it Yeats's symbols of perfection ; or, if you don't like them, simply say any drama that will last as long as Shakespeare's). ' If one has not beautiful or powerful and individual speech,' says Yeats, ' one has not literature ' ; another Synge, in similar fortunate circumstances, is impossible. I do think that in *Sweeney* you have ' the reveries of the common heart, ennobled ' ; but I also think it significant that Mr. Eliot has not finished it. As for *Murder in the Cathedral*, that is by comparison middlebrow and dead. As Synge said, ' historical plays . . . are relatively worthless . . . Every healthy mind is more interested in *Tit-Bits* than in *Idylls of the King*.'

There will however always be a market (during booms at any rate) for the play that makes you think. The lowest grade, like *Dangerous Corner* and *Laburnum Grove* can go straight into the commercial theatre. The next level, consisting of the sort of play that does expound social criticism with more or less seriousness, and in relation to some willed (or wished for) ' attainable advantages ' is fodder for art and left-wing little theatres. Sandwich *The Rumour* between *Twelfth Night* and *The School for Scandal*,

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or *Major Barbara* between *As You Like It* and *Dear Brutus*, and a reputation for broadmindedness and up-to-the-minute culture will follow you all the days of your life. The top layer, exemplified most conveniently just now by the work of Messrs. Auden and Isherwood, can only be produced before groups and cliques. But it has great potential commercial value. For as soon as its topicality (and therefore its only value) has worn out, as soon as its author is middle-aged[1] or elderly, or better still, a septuagenarian (the Audens of to-day are the Shaws of to-morrow) the British Public will pay lots of royalties in order to indulge in its favourite pleasure—flogging a dead horse in the name of culture ; and its confidence once given is always justified—the horse never kicks back.

According to the board-school theory, all these layers have some value ; it depends on how young you are, or how half-educated you are ; but sooner or later you will begin to say ' the bells of the Group Theatre (or whatever theatre it may be) ring ting a ling a ling, for you but not for me,' and seek sustenance elsewhere. And if you happen to want a form of art that gives you something other than just sustenance, you won't go to the theatre at all.

T. R. BARNES.

[1]I am not referring to Auden's poetry, which is another matter altogether.

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BERNARD VAN DIEREN

(1884 - 1936)

Musical Intelligence and 'The New Language.'

'*Junge Klassizitat*'—'the restoration of pure melody to its rightful position of sovereign over all the parts and determiner of all developments, as bearer of the idea and begetter of the harmony—in short, the most highly developed polyphony . . . the elimination of mere sensuousness and the renunciation of subjectivity . . . Not deep thoughts, or messages, or metaphysics, but pure music distilled, never under the mask of symbols or abstract concepts.'

Ferrucio Busoni, *Die Einheit der Musik*
(quoted by Cecil Gray in *Predicaments*).

I.

'MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE' is a difficult term because it is almost always used with no indication as to which of its many meanings is being referred to. These meanings fall roughly into two groups—the first concerned with the objective attitude of the artist to his art, the second concerned with the nature and function of intelligence in the actual process of artistic creation. It may be taken pretty well for granted that any composer who matters, nowadays, will have musical intelligence of the first type—he will be concerned about the theory of his art for the business of creation is bound to be difficult for him. Bernard van Dieren seems to me the most remarkable representative of musical intelligence in this sense. He was acutely aware of his position and of the difficulties to which, as an artist, he was exposed, and he tried, by a conscious exercise of intelligence, to achieve some 're-orientation' which would provide the music of the future with a more stable base. Although *Down Among the Dead Men*[1] doesn't attempt to make any 'statement' of van

[1]*Down Among the Dead Men*, by Bernard van Dieren (Oxford, 10/6).

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Dieren's attitude, it nevertheless seems to me one of the most important books on music of our generation, and it contains many illuminating asides which provide an opportunity for an attempt at estimating van Dieren's position. I will first, then, indicate what I take to be his attitude to his art and secondly try to give some notion of the intrinsic value of his compositions.

II.

In discussing van Dieren's attitude to his art it cannot be too strongly insisted that all his judgments about music were ultimately moral ones. This may seem unnecessarily obvious but is nevertheless important because in no art more than in music has criticism been vitiated by the refusal to realize that a judgment of sensibility is ultimately a moral judgment. In realizing this simple truth, as well as by friendship and (as we shall see) by kinship of ideals, van Dieren is allied with Busoni, and I must here quote part of a conversation between these two about the music of Chopin. Busoni, having played one of the *Ballades*, asks van Dieren what he thinks of it:

Van Dieren : I was completely fascinated.

Busoni : Oh yes, thank you, I quite believe that ; but what I want to know is whether you see anything in these pieces beyond their surface charm, their romantic appeal.

Van Dieren : I am afraid I see nothing but waltzes.

Busoni : That is exactly what I find myself. All Chopin's music is waltzes, *and* waltzes.

Van Dieren : I don't think that is the worst. But they are all the same waltzes. It must have struck you that Chopin invariably repeats his expositions. His only idea of form is a further repetition on a larger scale of what he has already said twice.

Busoni : That is one of his faults. I try to make the best of his music, yet I cannot bring myself to believe in it. There remains something one cannot explain. I mean what for short we call Chopin's ' originality.'

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This conversation seems to me to contain everything there is to be said about Chopin's music, both for and against, but I quote it not so much as a piece of criticism more valuable than the majority of academic studies lumped together, but rather to show how intrinsically the technical is linked with the moral criticism. And when, in another conversation, we find Scriabin's music, with its pretence that its oozy harmony has ' some profound ethical and mystical meaning,' described as ' an impudent imposition on a presumed public of halfwits, a mystico-erotic appeal to softening brains,' we see that the moral criticism has been extended to include also an implication of social criticism. Not that the placing of Scriabin is, at this date, remarkable in itself ; what matters is van Dieren's recognition in all his pronouncements about music that art cannot be altogether independent of its social background, and his uncompromising attitude to the comparative uncongeniality of that background at present.

A good part of van Dieren's book is taken up with the discussion of the nature of this background. From the listener's point of view he deplores the idiotic modern system of concert-going, the neglect and ignorance of composers who are unfashionable but historically or intrinsically important, and the complete and unavoidable lack of the ' religious ' attitude that would make music a participation between the artist and the people and but for the lack of which the other evils would be impossible. This deficiency of ' religious sense ' and of the traditions which are the product of it constitutes the central problem for the composer, and van Dieren's account of the importance and value of tradition for the artist is so cogent that I cannot avoid quoting it though the argument is familiar:

> ' No man, of however original genius, could wish for a greater gift than the rationally developed traditions of the country in which he is born and the race from which he descends. From his earliest years he becomes familiar with a completely organized idiom whose constituents are sufficiently balanced to make it a ready flexible medium for the practised hand. From the first he enjoys the advantage that he need not waste his time with first questions . . . he can say straightforwardly what he thinks and feels, and the terms he chooses will be mostly

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> intelligible to the average of his hearers. The composer who has the misfortune to be born at a time when almost everyone is dissatisfied with existing conditions, will feel obliged to display the utmost grade of impatience that he shares with the advanced thinkers among his public. Then tradition, so far from being a constant help, acts as an automatic brake, hampering his movements the more as they become more impetuous.'

The inevitable result of this dismal state of affairs is the sort of desperate shilly-shallying, pastiche and experimentism I tried to indicate in the last number of *Scrutiny*. Where, then, is the composer to turn? For van Dieren the ideal alliance of music with religious ritual was provided by the composers of the Catholic Church of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and he points out that it was with these composers that the great traditional forms of music were evolved, for since the very essence of music is melody, its logical form is polyphonic and ' the products of polyphonic structure, fugal, canonic and other contrapuntal devices, are . . . those which have grown out of the very being of music. They are perhaps the only organic forms that are inherent in its nature ; distinct from those that depend on literary associations . . . only these seem capable of lasting fecundity.' Moreover it is only in the Catholic Church that a musical convention exists at the present day which is still in touch with religious ritual, only here do we still find music that is ' an act of participation.' Of course, van Dieren doesn't suggest anything so naïvely one-eyed as that the musical convention of the Catholic Church as it is to-day could be an adequate medium for a contemporary composer seriously expressive of his age ; the point is that the Catholic convention being the only one in which a vital continuity is, however feebly, preserved it ought to be *used* in whatever efforts we make at evolving a ' new language,' since no new language that isn't also old—doesn't, that is, take account of the past—is likely to be of the slightest value—a contention which such things as Stravinsky's callously discarded phases, the brick-wall of atonalism and the resort of soi-disant ' serious ' composers to facetiousness and ' Biting Irony ' have already abundantly proved. Towards the end of his book van Dieren writes:

> ' Meanwhile, if we hope to see music reinstated in anything

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like its past glories, we ought to teach young composers respect for their art, and interest in forms which grew, through musical logic, from a social need. They are, in truth, few, and they demand more application than composers are, on the whole, prepared to give. Strictly ordered polyphony is the one with the most impressive lineage. It is also the one that has remained unassailable where others lost any prestige they ever possessed.'

This is as near to a statement of faith as van Dieren comes, and I now want to illustrate my conviction that it is an eminently reasonable passage and that those few composers who have really done anything towards founding a new musical language have done so without destroying or regarding with a cheap and helpless cynicism the work of their predecessors.

III.

I have said that melodic imagination is the creative essence of music, and this few musicians would deny. With the first great European composers, Palestrina, Vittoria, Allegri and Byrd, the organic forms of music were evolved through the combination of melodies in ordered polyphony ; hence too was born, logically, diatonic harmony. By the time of Haydn and Mozart harmonic homophonic conventions have come into existence parallel with the development of the classical symphonic form ; but melody is still the ' idea and begetter,' polyphonic interest is still prominent (notably in the last movement of the *Jupiter*), and it is quite impossible to consider the melodies and harmonies apart from each other. Thus the opinion of a well-known music critic that Mozart was ' not a great melodist ' seems to me meaningless since the whole structure of Mozart's greater works is the exquisite flower of a melodic root and we cannot say that his ' treatment ' makes commonplace tunes ' great ' since we cannot even conceive of the ' treatment ' as existing apart from the melodies. The trouble starts with Beethoven. Even if we admit that Beethoven made profounder and perhaps more far-reaching discoveries in the human spirit than any man who ever expressed himself in sound, we cannot help feeling that he never manifests quite the astonishing emotional and intellectual control of Mozart of the last three symphonies, in which the music is ' about ' everything because it is ' about '

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nothing, being completely self-sufficient and self-contained. Now in Beethoven we are conscious of a certain duality ; of a struggle against self-imposed limitations. It is not that melodic imagination wasn't still for him the prime factor of creation but it is rather as though he were compelled, perhaps by the very complexity and difficulty of the modes of experience to which he was obliged, to become self-conscious as Palestrina and Mozart had never been. What is new in Beethoven's music—historically considered—is the ' dramatic ' element ; we see in him the emergence of the idea of the composer as Tragic Hero. It might be argued that the intrusion of this element is partly responsible for the increasing tendency in Beethoven's music to think of harmony (although only ' begotten of melody ') vertically and dramatically instead of horizontally and polyphonically, but whether this is so or not it remains true that the fashion, set by *critics of* Beethoven almost contemporaneously with him, of considering the composer as the Tragic Hero uncomfortably buffeted by the blows of Fate, Destiny or what-else, led inevitably to the conception of music from a dramatic rather than from a purely musical standpoint. This, of course, is considerably to oversimplify a question which has, for instance, social parallels (the appearance during the nineteenth century of the ' light ' composer as something apart from, and fulfilling a different function than, the serious composer is not without significance), but I am concerned here only with permutations in the language of music, and in this respect the changing attitude had two main consequences. One was that the traditional (polyphonic) forms of music gave way, being purely musical, to looser forms which, like the ramshackle symphonic poem, were capable of embodying material which was to a certain extent extra-musical, and composers, become self-conscious, began to wonder if the business of Content and Form might not constitute a Problem, a proposition which would have been unintelligible to Mozart or Bach. The other consequence was that harmony, because of its dramatic expressiveness, begun to usurp the place properly occupied by melody, and the two were thought of as rival interests rather than as complementary parts of an indivisible unity. Now, as van Dieren points out, ' melody can exist by itself, but neither harmony nor rhythm can ' ; and ' no intricate chromaticism nor cunning anastomosis of unconnected tonalities

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ever achieves the variety of half-tints resulting from melodic structure with rationally disposed separate lines.' The logical culmination of this ousting of melody by harmony was that unhappy if resplendent mongrel the Wagnerian music-drama, where the portentous wisps of melody, although provided with high-sounding labels like Male and Female Love, Greed, Knowledge and what-not, flounder helplessly on the sea of chromaticism and the listener is left, in Mr. Turner's expressive phrase, to *swim*. That Wagner had a very remarkable talent of a second-rate order no one would deny ; but the greater part of his music is quite literally meaningless because it is induced and faked, and could only have been accepted as the expression of some profound mystical experience by a public which, being avid for some sort of substitute for religious experience, was open to be gulled by the first and perhaps the greatest Self-Advertiser. But, as Mr. Turner has pointed out, no amount of philosophic jargon can disguise *for long* the quality of feeling revealed in a work, and the quality of feeling revealed in Wagner's music makes it obvious that the only virtues he was capable of apprehending were the primary physical ones, that he was the first He-man in the Grand Style, and the first artistic exponent of the Good Time. This is not a sneer. The physical virtues are intrinsically important, and Wagner conceived them with a genuinely heroic magnificance and with a genius so musically vital and exuberant that we can only apply to it the adjective ' stupendous.' Nor do I wish to countenance the ignorant notion that there is anything *inherently* extra-musical in the romantic conception of music as spiritual autobiography since music has always been perhaps the most subjective and romantic of the arts. What matters for us is first the *deliberate and self-conscious* adaptation of a self-dramatising *attitude* which the ' romantic ' composer takes up ; and secondly the means whereby Wagner was able to persuade his public to take his art, however admirable in itself and however superior his conception of the physical virtues may be to the moribund debased values they have since become, for something it most decidedly was not. And we see that Wagner was able to pull this deceit over the public partly because of the force of his personality and partly because of his technical resort to harmonic devices at the expense of melody, *for it is in his melodies that the composer's*

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inner quality, the essence of his sensibility, is willy-nilly revealed.[1] The trouble with harmony is that there is a limit to the number of ways in which chords, however interesting in themselves, may be treated. When all the combinations and permutations of a particular harmonic idiom have been used up, that idiom becomes automatically dead matter, *cliché*. This is what happened to Wagner himself in some of his later work, and this is what was exhibited on a larger and more pernicious scale when the magnificent vulgarity of Wagner gave way to the trivial and smutty, manufactured vulgarity of the later Richard Strauss. Similarly the harmonic idiom of Debussy and Delius has now the monopoly in Tin-pan Alley ; and our ears are periodically offended by the ghastly and blasphemous harmonic monstrosities perpetrated by the popular peppers-up of Ye Olde Englysshe Folke Musicke.

It is partly because of his insistence on melodic line that Berlioz—the last of the great ' melodic ' composers and an isolated figure in the nineteenth century—seems to have so great a contemporary significance. Even to-day academicians still say that Berlioz had a ' poor ' harmonic sense, by which they mean that his harmony was not like Wagner's. It was rather perfectly logical, musical harmony, begotten of a melodic line of a singular power, purity and originality, and it is revealing that the very persons who refer so patronizingly to Berlioz's harmony are at this day as incapable of apprehending the nature of that extraordinarily subtle and flexible organism the Berliozian melody, as were the crassest academic minds among Berlioz's contemporaries.

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[1]And hence Wagner's conscious employment in some of his later works of a ' new polyphony ' merely reveals his melodic deficiences. His combination and interweaving of multitudes of ' pregnant thematic fragments ' instead of genuine melodic lines, sounds in performance practically identical with his familiar pseudo-mystico-voluptuous harmonic chromaticism, and only provides further evidence of his inability to create great melody. Vital melody implies vital harmony and vital polyphony produces it ; Wagner's ' polyphony ' is a cheap substitute for both melody and harmony, and bears about as much relationship to genuine polyphony as does margarine to butter. Wagner's art usually becomes one degree more false as it becomes more pretentious.

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It seems that any contemporary composer who is of any consequence has got to take account of the new freedom and complexity that Berlioz gave to melodic line. Of course, there have been revolts against the preponderance of 'dramatic' harmony, but to treat rhythm as an end in itself is no less wrong-headed and basically as sentimental, nor is there any comparison between the arbitrarily imposed *counterpoint* of, say, *Les Six*, and the logical polyphony of, say, Vaughan Williams' *Job* or Walton's *Symphony* (where the most 'daring' harmonic dissonances are natural because polyphonically logical). It is, of course, much more difficult to write several lines of melody which at the same time satisfy our harmonic sense ; yet it is only through some such rigorous discipline that the composer of the future will write music which is sane rather than insane—insane like much of the later work of Bartok in which a simple folk melody is punctuated by ferocious clusters of adjacent semitones which make, musically, quite literally *nonsense*. Van Dieren's music always makes sense, that is its strength. I have tried to indicate what is its technical nature in the light of the composer's attitude to his art ; I will finally attempt some brief evaluation of this music as such ; of the importance which I think van Dieren's music may have for the composer of the future, quite apart from the example which he set of intelligence and sensitiveness about the material of his art.

IV.

The most obvious characteristic of van Dieren's music is its prodigious difficulty. I do not make this remark as a pleasantry, for the difficulty of van Dieren's music, both to perform and to listen to, is intrinsically important and relates him not only to Busoni but also to Satie. These three composers were alike distinguished by a remarkable honesty and integrity of purpose, and the inevitable hostility they felt, as a consequence to their honesty, to their environment, gave to their music the curious quality of solitariness and 'classical' austerity I tried to describe, with reference to Satie, in the last number of *Scrutiny*.[1] Technically,

[1]It is interesting to note that both van Dieren and Busoni were exiles—van Dieren a Dutchman living in England, Busoni an Italian living in Germany.

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the comparison with Satie cannot be pushed too far, for although he too put the insistence upon purity and melodic line, his 'hostility' took the form of an effort to subdue the 'personal' element as far as was possible so that his music has that singularly tenuous, almost transparent texture which makes it perhaps the nearest approach to an 'abstract,' completely objective music ever achieved by a composer of equal significance. Busoni and van Dieren, despite the purity and restraint of their music, are not objective to anything like this degree ; and thus whereas Satie's *Socrate* seems to us, as it were, almost a *disembodied* expression of sensibility, 'the music of solitude' existing timelessly and spacelessly, we are conscious of Busoni's magnificent *Piano Concerto* rather as the work of one particular extremely intelligent and sentient man of the modern world which *therefore* has relevance for us. There is nothing paradoxical in attributing to Busoni's music, nevertheless, the sort of æsthetic impersonality and purity he claimed for it—any more than it is paradoxical to describe Ben Jonson's art as 'impersonal.' It is Satie, of course, who is abnormal, and although *Socrate* is more remarkable as a contemporary document it has perhaps therefore less vitality than Busoni's work ; *Socrate*, moreover, is inevitably something of a *tour de force* which cannot possibly be repeated and could have no positive influence on the music of the future. Satie achieved simplicity of texture (but it doesn't follow that *Socrate* is therefore a less difficult work than Busoni's concerto, rather the contrary) only at a cost ; usually the music of the contemporary composer who, like Busoni or van Dieren, genuinely has musical intelligence, will be extremely complex and available only to a comparatively small audience. Busoni realized this when he said 'We must make the texture of our music such that no amateur can touch it,' and the ferocity of the hostility of academic musicians and journalists towards a music such as his which resolutely refused to make concessions cannot readily be imagined.[1] It is probable that the necessity of

[1]We in England—and twenty years later—cannot easily realize the intensity of this sort of hatred. Van Dieren tells us that it took the form of the grossest personal slander ; it was even rumoured, any sort of venereal disease being unfortunately out of the question, that Busoni died of delirium tremens.

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making the best of both the world of the professional virtuoso and that of the artist further complicated matters for Busoni, and I am inclined to think—though adequate performances of Busoni are too rare to give him a fair chance—that magnificent and important works like the *Piano Concerto* and *Doktor Faust*, while achieving at times a tragic intensity, are nevertheless not truly tragic music but remain at bottom essentially negative—though iconoclastic rather than, like *Socrate*, passive and resigned. The importance of Busoni—with van Dieren—as a herald of the ' new language ' cannot easily be overestimated ; the question is, has van Dieren anything positive, intrinsic to his music, which Busoni has not?

If one had to describe, in a phrase, what constituted van Dieren's chief virtue one would say, I think, that he was a great melodist. Although Busoni too conceived his art polyphonically we do not find in his work anything like that exquisite beauty of melodic line which has made it possible for van Dieren to write some of the finest vocal music of our time—a time when most composers show a pathetic inability to realize the nature and capabilities of the human voice. Now it is important to remember that van Dieren wrote very few works and those mainly for small combinations ; that although within these few works he manifests a remarkable diversity of styles, each style is nevertheless a logical and consistent development which having been used for some particular purpose is then discarded ; and that although van Dieren's later works are still very difficult to listen to, they are not nearly as *intricate* as his early ones. I think that only in Mozart and Busoni can one find any parallel to the contrapuntal and technical complexity and mastery of the *First Quartet*, the *Chinese Symphony*, *Diaphony*, or the piano *Sketches*, and in Mozart alone is this prodigious technical skill so completely and inevitably organic, so that it is quite impossible to conceive of the means apart from the end. But the melodic line in these early works—with the exception of the austerely lovely *Sonata for Solo violin*—despite or rather because of its exquisite purity is extremely tortured and twisted in texture. (It is interesting to compare this melodic intricacy with the melodic fluency of the ' communal ' composer who, like Dowland or Déodat de Séverac, has a source of vital melodic material expressive of the deepest needs and desires

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of a people, ready at hand and waiting to be converted to his own use. This melodic richness accounts for the astonishing crop of fine minor composers that a communal society always produces ; in a more difficult time many of these men wouldn't manage to express themselves at all). Now the comparative simplicity of the melodic line in van Dieren's later works—notably in the two settings of Ave Maria, Opus 20, the Villon Ballade with String Quartet, Opus 17 No. 2, and the magnificent Spenser sonnet for Tenor and Eleven Solo Instruments—seems to me an achievement to which there is no parallel in contemporary music. In the poignancy and tender beauty of this music van Dieren has achieved that ' reconquest of serenity ' that Busoni said was the aim of his ' new classicism ' but which he himself never achieved. The magnitude of this task for a contemporary composer is obvious, and the anguish and suffering in this music of van Dieren makes it curiously exhausting to listen to ; but that the consummation is serene seems to me unquestionable. (The subtlety and delicacy of the harmony is convincing evidence in favour of van Dieren's belief in the superiority of harmony that is polyphonically logical—achieved by the interweaving of ' rationally disposed melodic lines.').

Peter Warlock, in his excellent book on Delius, rightly claimed serenity for this composer's music, but there is a vital difference between Delius's serenity and that of van Dieren. I do not by this intend to countenance the silly assertion that Delius was a flabby escapist and an indifferent melodist since the vitality and power of the *Mass of Life*, the *Song of the High Hills* and *Sea Drift*, and the magnificence of the choral writing are sufficient to disprove this ; yet it remains true that Delius is a composer of a past order and that his uncompromisingly homophonic conception of harmony, while it was as a personal idiom the condition of his strength, was also responsible for the curious lack of development he manifests. I think the quality that van Dieren possessed and Delius did not possess was musical intelligence of what I have called the second type. It is impossible to define the part played by intelligence in the creation of works of art ; one can only say it is a sort of clairvoyant insight into the nature of what one experiences, that it is something which Palestrina and Mozart and the late Beethoven and Shakespeare and Blake and sometimes

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Lawrence do possess and which Wagner and Brahms and Jonson and Swift as emphatically do not possess. Oddly enough artists having this quality are often dubbed as ' mystics ' (this has already happened to van Dieren) though, as Mr. Leavis has pointed out with reference to Lawrence, they are distinguished more by their astonishing spiritual normality than by spiritual abnormality. It is this quality, anyway, that van Dieren possesses alone with Sibelius among contemporary composers, which makes it possible to compare van Dieren's music with that of Palestrina. But there is this great difference between the two ; Palestrina's music fulfilled a great religious and social function ; van Dieren's music, with similar qualities of suffering, serenity and ' intelligence,' is available only to a very small isolated minority of listeners and only to them with the expense of great effort and concentration. I have only realized van Dieren's importance through hearing a number of his works performed at the memorial concert at the Aeolian Hall, and was completely baffled and unimpressed at a first hearing of the *Chinese Symphony* ; it is the purpose of these remarks not to give an ' adequate ' account of van Dieren's music, but to persuade the reader that the effort needed to approach this music seems to me to be very well rewarded. It is too much, one supposes, to hope that some enterprising recording company will give us adequate recordings of this music which would benefit so greatly by the intimacy of private listening.

Van Dieren's music will remain, it seems, one of those ' curious byways ' beloved of the compilers of musical encyclopædias ; meanwhile it provides us with a little encouragement before we bow our rapidly whitening heads to the doleful prophecy of the last paragraph of van Dieren's book:

> ' Let us go on hoping against hope, however much in our own times we see a foul determination to pull down tender Euterpe to the level of a lady cashier whose chief earnings are made on the sly in her rag-time. The ghastly popularity of music in the last few years, and the deep, nostalgic dissatisfaction of all thinking musicians, constitute a warning too stern for anyone to disregard. When we yearn for a faith and a discipline, we must remember that there are inspiring examples in existence, before, in despair, we seek salvation in determined speculation,

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or come to turn the search for restored balance and formal vitality into a game of blind-man's-buff.'

Van Dieren's music itself provides one of those 'inspiring examples'; and if the serenity he so painfully achieved cannot crudely be dubbed a 'new faith,' it nevertheless constitutes an oasis in the waste land of contemporary music that no one seriously interested in music or society can afford to disregard.

W. H. MELLERS.

REVALUATIONS (X):

THE VISION OF PIERS PLOWMAN

THE recent publication of a modernized version of *Piers Plowman*[1] suggests that a revaluation would be opportune. There are signs that Langland is at last coming into appreciation. Mr. Wells' translation is only one of them; it was preceded by Mr. Coghill's important article in *Medium Aevum*, which showed conclusively that Langland's poem was not, as it had been held to be, an example of mediæval anarchy, redeemed only for the persevering philologist and the hardy student of social conditions. Nevill Coghill was followed by Christopher Dawson, who pointed out the need for a popular edition of the poem. Yet, without being ungrateful for all this, we may affirm that much remains to be done. Coghill's work is rather a prelude to criticism than an attempt at criticism itself, and Dawson's essay was a little disappointing by contrast with the rest of the book[2] in which it

[1] *The Vision of Piers Plowman*. Translated into modern English by Henry W. Wells. With an Introduction by Nevill Coghill. London, 1935, Sheed and Ward, 8/6.
[2] *Mediæval Religion*.

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appeared. It revealed the sociological, rather than the critical, outlook of its author, and tended to confuse high moral intentions with literary merit—a fault too common in contemporary Catholic criticism. As for the present rendering of the poem, Mr. Wells would not claim that it constitutes any substitute for the original ; it is unfortunate that obvious practical difficulties make a reasonably cheap and attractive edition of the original, delivered from the shadow of Skeat and his notes, a very remote possibility.

A contrast between Wells' version and the original may serve to introduce some of the issues involved in an understanding of Langland. The following lines, taken from Passus C XX, run thus in their modern dress:

> These three things that I tell you are interpreted as follows.
> The wife is our wicked flesh that will not be chastened ;
> For nature cleaves to us continually and is contrary to the spirit.
> When it falls it finds excuses that its frailty is inherent,
> And for that is lightly forgiven and the evil forgotten,
> Where men ask mercy and purpose amendment.
> The rain that rains on restless evenings,
> Is the sickness and the sorrow that we suffer often.

But what Langland wrote was this:

> These thre that ich telle of thus beoth to vnderstonde ;
> The wif is oure wikkede fleshe that wol nat be chasted,
> For kynde clyueth on hym evere to contrarie the soule.
> And though he falle, he fynt skyles that frelete hit made ;
> And that is lyghtliche for-gyue and for-gute bothe
> To man, that mercy asketh and amende thenketh.
> Ac the reyn that reyneth ther we reste sholde,
> Beoth syknesses and other sorwes that we suffren ofte.

This comparison is not set forth to disparage the work of Mr. Wells. It is an effort to point out an important change in the value and significance of English words since the days of Langland. The first thing to notice is the continual tendency of the modern version to tone down the immediacy of personal experience, to erect a barrier of diplomatic generalization between the original emotion and its poetic expression. Already in the third line, ' spirit ' is a distinct weakening of the definite Christian dogmatic implications

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of ' soule,' and a vaguely aphoristic ' us ' is substituted for the direct reference to the flesh implied by ' hym.' In the following line, the rendering of ' that frelete hit made ' by ' its frailty is inherent ' is more serious ; it involves a depersonalized moralizing, an instinct to escape from the direct statement, that has followed everywhere in the track of the looser varieties of Protestantism. Passing over some lesser points, we are struck by the alteration of

Ac the reyn that reyneth ther we reste sholde,

to

The rain that rains on restless evenings,

where the sense of personal effort and weariness implied by the original is sacrificed for an irrelevant romantic trimming. The weakening of the new words is accompanied by a weakening of metre. Langland may not have been aware of the metrical subtleties of Anglo-Saxon, but he realized that the break at the centre of each alliterative line was the key to the whole effect ; his lines rise up to the pause, and fall as definitely away from it, and are so preserved from the dangers of a mere invertebrate flow. This is not so with Mr. Wells, whose lines are lacking in contrast and whose *cæsura* shifts uneasily from syllable to syllable and finds no certain resting place.

I hope I shall not be accused of quibbling. My aim is not to attack this translation, but to show how a change of language operating over several centuries has made Mr. Wells' complete success an impossibility. In this case, too, a study of linguistic qualities enables us to ' place ' Langland in the tradition of English poetry. The chief quality of his language, we have suggested, is its immediacy, its power of suggesting without adornment direct personal emotion. But this quality is not a personal creation of the poet ; it is the product of a long and mainly anonymous process in which the preacher's natural tendency to abstraction was wedded to the popular instinct for realistic description to produce the great tradition of English allegory. The preacher came to the pulpit armed with the Church's abstract survey of human failings in the shape of the Seven Deadly Sins, but he had to put them vividly before an audience who were accustomed to translate everything into terms of their own experience. Their sermons, in fact, were what we might call proverbial, for the proverb is nothing more

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than the translation of general law in terms of a particular knowledge.[1] They are full of such direct proverbs as 'Pore be hanged bi the necke; a rich man bi the purs,' or 'Trendle the appel nevere so far, he conyes fro what tree he cam.' From these it was only a natural step to bring the well-worn virtues and vices to life, to give each of them an easily recognizable and vivid embodiment. As time passed, these in their turn assumed more or less conventional shapes, and were handed from preacher to preacher until they became part of the common stock from which a writer like Langland could easily draw. That he did draw upon them is easily proved. I need not quote the famous incident in which Gloton set out for church and ended in the tavern; it has a long and clearly-established ancestry in mediæval preaching. Here is one preacher enlarging upon the theme of drunkenness:

> Thow a now se thre candels, ye, thre mones ther a nother man seth but on, yit I seye he is blynd. How truliche a may nat se what is good and what is evel! . . . I pray the, is nat this a grete blindnes, thynkis te, whan a man hath sete ate nale hows or ate taverne alday, ye, nat onliche alday, but also muche of the nith therto—and ate laste cumth hom as drunke as a dosil,[2] and chit his wyf, reprevith his children, bet his meyne, ye, unnethe a kan go to bedde but as a his browth therto with his servauntes hondis!

All the elements of Langland's description are there, used by the preacher to gain a vivid effect and even to rouse a certain amount of laughter in order to bring his point home.

The poetic qualities of which this tradition made Langland master can readily be shown in quotation; I select his picture of Covetyse in Passus C VII as typical:

> Thenne cam Couetyse ich can nat hym discryue,
> So hongerliche and so holw Heruey hym-selfe lokede.

---

[1] On the whole of this question, see Owst's *Literature and Pulpit in Mediæval England*.

[2] Owst says that this apparently means 'the spigot of a barrel'; in this case, we should note as typical the vividness and unlikeliness of the phrase.

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He was bytelbrowed and baberlupped with two blery eyen,
And as a letherene pors lollid hus chekus,
Wel sydder than hys chyn ychiueled for elde:
As bondemenne bacon hus berd was yshaue,
With hus hod on his heued and hus hatte bothe;
In a toren tabarde of twelue wynter age.

The qualities of this passage are clearly visual qualities, and their ancestry is obvious. It derives from centuries of effort on the part of the preacher to bring home the great and common vices of his time to his audience. Even the alliteration is as much a device of the speaker as a traditional poetic technique; note how it falls again and again upon the descriptive epithets which are the key to the whole effect. And the words chosen are precisely those which a preacher could be certain of sharing with his audience, intense, but in no way 'poetic,' if by poetic we mean a refined decoration of not too pressing emotions. These merits, once we admit them, are soon seen to be more than personal, more even than the qualities of Langland's own particular tradition; they are a general characteristic of the best English poetry. They are based upon an extraordinary ability to describe personal experience in terms of a common idiom, founded in this case on the simple but fundamental activities of a society closely connected with the land. It is unnecessary to prove Langland's close contact with rural life, for it is clear on every page of his poem. It opens with the wanderings of a shepherd on the Malvern hills and never moves far from them in spirit. Piers Plowman, its hero, is merely a universalizing of the normal English life, the life which all readers of the poem would understand and in terms of which they could establish a common idiom with their poet. To realize how such a symbol could be given a universal significance, we have only to see how Piers appears successively as a 'fine and honest farmer,'[1] as the expounder of Charity and the Holy Trinity, as the Good Samaritan, and as Jesus himself. We are becoming increasingly aware of the way in which honest and active emotional responses can be fostered in people whose close contact with the soil and with traditional ways of living and working have not been under-

[1]Coghill's *Introduction*.

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mined by the deadening forces of modern industrialism. If this can be so, even to-day, it is not surprising that this common social basis provided the vital idiom for the greatest English poetry.

Langland, in fact, was a great poet, and his greatness throws some light upon the nature of the English contribution to poetry. The great English poets have always been those who have rescued English from scholarship run to seed ; the genius of the language has always resisted false systems and false conventions. One should not, at this date, have to quote extensively to prove this point. Shakespeare and Donne, in their turn, were great poets because they freed English from the bondage of a dead scholarship and restored to it expressiveness and idiomatic strength. That was what Shakespeare was doing, when he wrote:

> who would fardels bear,
> To *grunt* and *sweat* under a weary life . . . ?

These two verbs, so expressive in their evocation of common physical effort, should not have pleased those who followed logically the precepts of the Humanists. Nor should the sharp effect by which the ' bare bodkin ' is doubly driven in by contrast with the Latin of ' quietus,' so that it comes upon us with a definite effect of physical shock. Hopkins, too, was in his day the bearer to English of this new linguistic life, and his praise of Dryden for stressing ' the naked thew and sinew of the English language ' is only a critical formulation of Shakespeare's practice. And their idiom was similar to that of Langland, whose language was vital English, and the alliterative metre into which it naturally fell the vital vehicle for it. Driven underground after the Norman Conquest by heavy versifiers who could neither make a foreign medium live nor retain the life of the old, it revived in the fourteenth century as a natural framework for the English language. I am not forgetting Chaucer, and the foreign influences upon his work. Over two centuries of reversals and foreign domination had adversely affected what we may call the English tradition. More especially, they had divorced that tradition from healthy contact with important sources of self-consciousness and intelligence ; there are places where the allegory of *Piers Plowman* drops into heaviness and unwieldy personification, and these are precisely the faults that Chaucer, who was himself no less English than Langland,

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succeeded in avoiding. But the full alliterative metre represents values more important than those of the Chaucerian version of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, and by virtue of these values its meaning survives in later English literature. In particular, Langland's verse achieves a peculiar relation of rhythm to feeling, the same relation which allowed Shakespeare to play sense and stress against the restraining influence of the traditional blank verse.

An application of the principles to the opening lines of *Piers Plowman* will make my meaning clear:

> In a somere seyson whan soft was the sonne,
> Y shop me in-to shrobbis as y a shepherd were,
> In abit as an ermite vnholy of werkes,
> Ich went forth in the worlde wonders to hure,
> And sawe many cellis and selcouthe thynges.
> Ac on a may morwening on Maluerne hulles
> Me byfel for to slepe for weyrynesse of wandryng ;
> And in a launde as ich lay lenede ich and slepte,
> And merueylously me mette as ich may yowe telle ;
> Al the welthe of this worlde and the woo bothe,
> Wynkyng as it were wyterly ich saw hyt,
> Of tryuthe and of tricherye of tresoun and of gyle,
> Al ich saw slepynge as ich shal yowe telle.

The advantages of scansion by stress rather than by mechanical counting are obvious here. The exigencies of the language dictate the position of the stresses, and these in turn are determined by what D. H. Lawrence described as ' the ebbing and lifting emotion.' The break in the middle of the line may serve to give point to a balanced contrast, or to emphasize a significant parenthesis in the flow of the narrative. Langland's metre, in fact, was the natural setting of a living language. The Victorian mechanism of scansion, with its cumbrous names and hieroglyphic signs, is only possible for a medium that has become ossified and lost contact with genuine feeling. Langland's language, as we have seen, was vital because the hideous modern plastering of the emotional life had not yet come to make men incapable of physical, mental or spiritual feeling. To adapt a phrase from *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, man's continuity with his past and with his own environment was still not

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mechanical, but organic. One very important indication of this was the fact that Langland, in the passage just quoted, showed that he could do what very few modern poets have been able to accomplish—that is, to handle a plain unadorned narrative, bringing out its full implications, without interrupting its natural flow. He succeeded in telling us that his poem was to be a complete survey of human life under the aspect of good and evil (for he saw—' Al the welthe of this worlde and the woo bothe '), without in any way distracting us from the preliminary statement of the circumstances of the poem. And, since we could trust very few of even the greatest of our Romantic poets to do this, we must conclude that it was in itself a considerable achievement.

These considerations will serve, I hope, to point out how Langland is great. They will now help us to grasp the essence and value of his experience, which I propose to estimate by a comparison with the other great allegorist of English poetry—I mean Spenser. Spenser's language is clearly a different instrument from Langland's. Even at its simplest, in *Mother Hubberd's Tale* and other poems which derive from traditional sources, the divergence is obvious. In so far as his inspiration is English, and not that of the French humanists, it is clearly the decorative aspect of Chaucer that appeals to him. Even when he uses the English vocabulary which he cultivated so sedulously, the words have quite a different significance. Here he is elaborating an English subject:

> Seest, howe brag yond Bullocke beares,
> So smirke, so smooth, his pricked ears?
> His hornes bene as broade as Rainbowe bent,
> His dewelap as lythe as lasse of Kent.
> See howe he venteth into the wynd.
> Weenest of love is not hys mynd?
> Seemeth thy flocke thy counsell can,
> So lustless beene they, so weake so wan,
> Clothed with cold, and hoary with frost.[1]

This is the voice of a new sophistication. Words like ' brag,' ' smirke,' and ' pricked ' have a traditional look about them,

[1] *The Shepheardes Calender : Februarie.*

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but their use suggests the arrival of a new poetic purpose. They are fastidiously chosen to present to the court a courtly picture of the country-side, and they are set in a rhythm which acts as a decorative border to the whole. They fit the social grace and dignity which an Elizabethan court possessed, and their effect is undoubtedly pleasing. But they suggest danger at hand. Already there is a perilous lack of root in this convention. Those whose way of life has become remote from the real soil cannot expect to preserve for long the veneer of the soil ; and that, translated into social terms, is the meaning of *The Shepheardes Calender*. When Spenser tries to write about the common physical experiences of healthy mankind, his words become little more than pleasant decorative trimmings: they are coins which have only a diminishing reserve of real feeling behind them. When Langland desires to express his deepest feelings, he finds it natural to rely on the simplest images. He writes of the Incarnation in terms of the most universal physical processes:

> Loue is the plante of pees and most preciouse of vertues ;
> For heuene holde hit ne mygte so heuy hit semede,
> Til hit hadde on erthe goten hym-selve.
> Was neuere lef vp-on lynde lyghter ther-after,
> As whanne hit hadde of the folde flesch and blod ytake ;
> Tho was it portatyf and pershaunt as the poynt of a nedle,
> May non armure hit lette nother hye walles ;
> For-thy is loue ledere of oure lordes folke in heuene.

The issue is quite clear. Langland's language is the vehicle of a finely integrated experience, alive and sensitive to every point of contact, and crystallizing suavely into poetry. The effect of that adjective ' pershaunt,' followed by ' as the poynt of a nedle,' for example, is not so inferior to Shakespeare's ' bare bodkin ' ; it is certainly of the same kind, and depends upon the same vitality of perception. The words are almost transparent vehicles for the emotion that underlies them and demands the simplest, most vital expression. Their value, so to speak, is sacramental (the word has a peculiar relevance in view of the nature of Langland's allegory) and the presence of universal physical experiences is a help in indicating even the most spiritual reality. But for Spenser these things have only a decorative value, and here too is a philosophy

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at stake beneath the critical issue ; body is body, and can only meet spirit by degrading it—this was the implication of Spenser's attraction to Neo-Platonism.

Spenser, in fact, is the first great Puritan poet. The second was Milton, who, it is well-known, thought Spenser a better moral teacher than Aquinas. No two men have done more, by their very genius, to crush the true poetic tradition of England. It is typical of all Puritans that their attempts to escape the body and live by the ' spiritual ' faculty alone in a kind of baseless caricature of Christian sanctity leads to the free spawning of every kind of evil. Milton's account of the relation of Sin and Death in Book II of *Paradise Lost* is perfectly typical. It can be amply paralleled in Spenser. The pages of the *Faerie Queene* abound in monsters of every description, who are perfectly unreal as moral representations of evil, but who teem with incredible frequency and vividness. One cannot avoid feeling that Spenser got a kind of half-horrified thrill out of this continual loathsome reproduction. Indeed, one must be struck by the vividness of Spenser's description of evil and deformity :

> And by his side rode loathsome Gluttony,
> Deformed Creature, on a filthie swyne,
> His bellie was vp-blowne with luxury,
> And eke with fatnesse swollen were his eyne,
> And like a Crane his necke was long and fyne,
> With which he swallowed vp excessive feast,
> For want whereof poore people oft did pyne ;
> All all the way, most like a brutish beast,
> He spued vp his gorge, that all did him deteast.

> In green vineleaues he was right fitly clad ;
> For other clothes he could not weare for heat,
> And on his head an yuie girlond had,
> From vnder which fast trickled downe the sweat,
> Still as he rode, he somewhat still did eat,
> And in his hand did beare a bouzing can,
> Of which he supt so oft, that on his seat
> His drunken corse he scarse vpholden can,
> In shape and life more like a monster, than a man.

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After that, one would not deny Spenser's greatness as a poet. But the passage is doubly significant in view of its ancestry, which is Christian and mediæval ; the ' bouzing can ' is there to remind us of its connection with the vivid vernacular, and the contrasting reference to the poor recalls one of the main social grievances of the English pulpit. The whole picture, moreover, belongs to the world of the miracle-plays, where Herod died raving and rotting to pieces as Aelfric had described him in a sermon more than 500 years before. But there evil had always been subordinate to and less real than good, so that even Herod might easily turn into something like a joke. All was given its proper place in a theology that covered the whole of experience and centred everything upon the complete man's destined vision of God. So it was in Langland, whose allegory, like his language, grew out of his experience before transcending it. The symbol of Piers has a content that Spenser's figures lack for this very reason ; he is fully natural both before and after he touches the supernatural. Langland's moral judgments are always founded on particular instances, and his portraits remind us of Ben Jonson's humours. The ' theory ' of humours is often regarded as scholarly and continental in impulse, but this is not so.[1] The essence of it consists in taking a real human type and in stressing one aspect of it until it gives a peculiar life to the whole figure. The quality of that life may be described as ' intensity ' ; it dominates the character even to the point of distortion, though the distortion, being to scale within the limits of the play, always gives us increased and not diminished reality. Molière, of course, has the quality, but in him it is complicated by social considerations ; in Jonson, the moral impulse stands unconcealed. But it is not new in his work, for Langland's poem is full of it. The tavern incident in Passus C VII, already referred to, is typical. It is of the same kind as *Bartholemew Fair*, similar in its Hogarthian fidelity to detail and in the firmness of its morality ; and the mention of Hogarth reminds us that there was still vitality in this tradition in the eighteenth century.

But it is time to return to particulars, and a single example

[1]Since writing this, I have seen Mr. L. C. Knights' article on ' Tradition and Ben Jonson ' in *Scrutiny*, September, 1935. The connection is obvious, as is my debt to Mr. Eliot at this point.

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here is worth pages of generalities. The words of Lechery, a typical Langlandian personification, will serve:

> To eche maide that ich mette ich made hure a synge
> Semynge to synne-warde and somme gan ich teste
> A-boute the mouthe, and by-nythe by-gan ich to grope,
> Til our brothers wil was on ; to werke we yeden
> As wel fastyngdaies as Frydaies and heye—feste euenes,
> As lief in lent as oute of lente all tymes liche—
> Such werkus with ous were neuere oute of season—
> Til we myghte no more ; thanne hadde we murye tales
> Of puterie and of paramours and proueden thorw speches,
> Handlynge and halsynge and al-so thorw cissynge
> Excitynge oure aither other til oure old synne ;
> Sotilede songes and sende out olde baudes
> For to wynne to my wil wommen with gyle ;
> By sorcerye somtyme and som tyme by maistrie.
> Ich lay by the louelokest and loued hem neuere after.
> Whenne ich was old and hor and hadde lore that kynde,
> Ich had lykynge to lauhte of lechours tales.
> Now, lord, for thy leaute of lecherours haue mercy!

All the characteristics we are seeking are here. Each element in this picture could be paralleled in the pages of the didactic literature of the time ; here is a related passage, one of many, taken from Owst's book:

> ' these costumable lechours, when age suffreth hem no longer to the dedus unclennes, yit woll thei than synge and make bost at ther owne lewdnes in lechery ; ye, and tell more therof at the taverne than ever he tolde othur thenketh to tell to his confessour all the dayes of his liff.'

No two selections could do more to illustrate the origin and development of that concreteness and vitality in delineation which is the basis of the English comedy of humours and of Langland's allegorical method. The characteristics of lechery are not presented in a Spenserian abstraction, but by the mouth of a human being. The feeling is human, and not only human, but dramatic ; that is the essence of the practice of humours. The human figure is simplified by that ' distortion to scale ' of which we have spoken,

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but so simplified that its significance is not less but greater. Real human nature is given us, but given under an aspect, seen in the light of one dominating quality. Such a simplification is essential to the dramatist, and Langland foreshadows the development of the Elizabethan theatre, not only here, but time and again in his work.

But this is not all. It is essential to realize that the human figure thus revealed through a dominating aspect is firmly subordinated to a moral aim. Lechery is given, towards the end of the speech, a certain tragic quality in the bitter line:

Ich lay by the louelokest and loued hem neuere after,

and in the vanity which is conveyed in the thought of

Whenne ich was old and hor and hadde lore that kynde.

The feeling is common in mediæval work and occurs again in *Piers Plowman*:

At churche in the charnel cheorles aren euel to knowe,
Other a knyght fro a knaue other a queyne fro a queane.

Such sentiments are not to be confused with the haunting presence of the inevitable worm, which, after the changes of the sixteenth century, extended from the domain of pathology to become an important part of religious experience. It is more to the point to remember that no community can be called balanced or complete which has not a considered attitude to the two central themes of European literature—death, and what Langland called ' the flesh ' ; without such an attitude poetry degenerates inevitably into triviality or romantic pose. Langland wrote within the framework of one such attitude ; we may find it unsatisfactory or incomplete, but it gave his work a point of universal reference. He did not share the metaphysical preoccupation of the Renaissance with the idea of impersonal Time, a preoccupation expressed in Shakespeare's line:

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws.

The feeling of the Sonnets is something new and complex. It is obtained here by transferring the epithet ' devouring,' which belongs naturally to the ' lion,' to Time, thus creating a very

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interesting emotional situation. The lion naturally raises associations of splendid and boundless life and activity ; but the transference of ' devouring ' suggests that all this activity is in reality a self-consuming one, that it is ultimately one with the wearing-down of life into pure annihilation. And the ' blunt ' shows the typical metaphysical sensing of the ultimate and intangible in terms of the life of the finger-tips. Shakespeare's tendency, in fact, as far as this poem is concerned (for it was only one of his many tendencies), is to subdue the nervous activity of life to the idea of Time ' metaphysically ' apprehended. In Langland, however, Time is regarded as merely the condition for the living moral action of man. Full value is given to the human and religious tragedy represented by the figure of Lechery. The tragedy is that of ' the expense of spirit in a waste of shame,' and Langland's moral judgment fully recognizes, not only the ' waste ' and the ' expense,' but the fact that it is ' of spirit,' and must be so in his Christian philosophy. So we emphasize once more that the allegory of *Piers Plowman* follows the principle of its writer's central doctrine—the Christian Incarnation. It starts from the real, and nothing that is real is irrelevant to it. Instead of imposing itself upon reality as a tyrannous abstraction, burdening the human and corporal with a disassociated spirituality, it works from the body to the soul, from natural life to the consummation of grace in which its author believed. And, by so doing, it teaches us the true strength of English literature.

Turn once more to Spenser, and you will find yourself in a different world. The bitter Fifth Book of the *Faerie Queene* only emphasizes what is characteristic of the whole work. Consider Artegall and his servant Talus, the confessed representatives of Spenserian justice:

> Long they her sought, yet no where could they finde her,
> That sure they ween'd she was escapt away ;
> But Talus, that could like a limehouse winde her
> And all things secrete wisely could bewray,
> At length, found out, whereas she hidden lay
> Vnder an heape of gold. Thence he her drew
> By the faire lockes, and fowly did array,
> Without pity of her goodly hew,
> That Artegall him selfe her seemless plight did rew.

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Yet for no pity would he chaunge the course
Of Justice, which in Talus hand did lye ;
Who rudely hayld her forth without remorse,
Still holding vp her suppliant hands on hye,
And kneeling at his feete submissiuely.
But he her suppliant hands, those hands of gold,
And eke her feete, those feete of siluer trye,
Which sought vnrighteousnesse, and iustice sold,
Chopt off, and nayld on high, that all might them behold,

Her selfe then tooke he by the sclender wast,
In vaine loud crying, and into the flood
Ouer the Castle wall adowne her cast,
And there her drowned in the durty mud:
But the streame washt away her guilty blood . . .

Once more, the technical mastery is considerable, a sure sign that Spenser was more interested than he sometimes was in his subject: I need only point to the fact that the rhymes do succeed in emphasizing the flow of the poet's indignation, and remark upon the sharp brutality of ' chopt off ' as the culmination of an effective rhetorical construction. But its success only serves to show how dubious and how barbarous (in the last resort) were the interests and emotions of its author. We must remember that the whole incident is more than moral allegory. Spenser was the sort of man who is sometimes admired in the most academic circles as ' an idealist, who was also a man of the world,' and the above represents the treatment that he regarded as suitable for the Irish among whom he lived. It defends a policy already put into operation by Lord Gray, the original of Artegall. That is its political meaning. Spiritually, it represents a view of Justice coloured by the bitter Puritan melancholy so typical of Spenser, and must be read in the light of his sombre reflections on decay and mutability. Puritanism is more than a mere matter of dark clothes and a nasalized psalm-singing ; Spenser was a courtier and Milton's ' urbanity ' was known to all his contemporaries. Its spirit can best be felt by a comparison of the *Faerie Queen* with *Piers Plowman*. The allegory of the latter is, as we have seen, a real and experienced thing, and its virtues and personifications spring

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out of flesh and blood. In Spenser, however, the knights and ladies are pale abstractions, so pale that their creator is unable to keep them apart in our minds as his tangled tale proceeds. Ultimately, the only reality is provided by Mutability and the Blatant Beast, for whom, one feels, the disembodied shades of Chastity, Temperance, and Courtesy are fair game. Langland's allegory is based on a hierarchy of virtues leading from the Life of Do-Well (the ordinary daily life, lived in the sight of God) to that of Do-best (the life of the saint who orders and directs the activities of the Church), and holiness is the crown of each and all of them ; but Spenser's Knight of Holiness is hardly to be distinguished from his fellow who represents Temperance. Both live only in the intellect ; for the emotions, they have no significance and no life. This suggests that Puritanism, as embodied in Spenser, is nothing else than the disembodied and destructive intellect preying on the body to kill the soul. That is the importance of Spenser and Milton, and their relation to the development of the English tradition. Their pallid successors are seen in the age of Tennyson and after, producing a dead poetry out of a dead ' poetic ' language—sterile emotions issuing in a sterilized speech. In such a situation, Langland commends himself to the attention of all by the breadth and healthiness of his experience. To maintain the actuality of our sensible and emotional responses is at once the function and the condition of art, and it points beyond itself to a view of life which is complete and, in a true sense, orderly. Complete, because it has a catholic appreciation of good at every level, and orderly, because it teaches us to be content with no intellectual synthesis that falsifies or belittles the scope of human experience. And those two aims might pass to-day for a definition of the function of criticism.

D. A. TRAVERSI.

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CORRESPONDENCE

49 St. George's Square,
S.W.1.
1st October, 1936.

The Editor,
Scrutiny,
6 Chesterton Hall Crescent, Cambridge.

Sir,

Although space will not permit me to reply as fully as I might wish to Mr. E. W. F. Tomlin's exacerbation at my review of *The Rock* in the *New Oxford Outlook* (November, 1935), perhaps I may be permitted to enlighten him on one or two details.

The mistake in the note of the book's price was neither engineered by any ulterior motive, nor due to falsification of memory on my part, as Mr. Tomlin rather impolitely suggests, but was an error on the part of the Editors. Nor was I at the time of writing in residence at Oxford. It so happens, however, that I had the misfortune to share Mr. Eliot's present religious adherence for many years and it may come as a further disappointment to Mr. Tomlin that I owe allegiance to none of the sects he enumerates. My observations (unlike his own apparently) were relatively disinterested. Nothing was farther from my purpose than the affirmation of any *a priori* soteriological standpoint and if he will take the trouble to consult my remarks he will find that I expressly avoid the term 'salvation' since it allows of the limited and controvertible interpretation he assigns to it, in favour of the wider term 'spiritual interests.' What I take exception to is Mr. Eliot's short-sighted dismissal of the influence and effect of other religious bodies in order to stage a specious triumph for the Church of England. Even if one holds that these are bad, that is no valid reason for pretending they do not exist. And surely Mr. Tomlin's inference that my opposition, in Mr. Eliot's case, of Goethe and Nietzsche to Andrewes and Aquinas argues a socialist bias is the absurdest of all non sequiturs. Biased himself apparently, he reads bias everywhere by a process of false

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deduction worthy of a paranoiac and because I express no partisanship for Mr. Eliot's ecclesiastical pantomime he withdraws from his ambush to discharge a whole volley of alarming strictures such as ' This is the weakest of all the " attacks " on Mr. Eliot's position.'

If Mr. Tomlin is content with *The Rock* as an example of religious apologetic, then I must confess I despair of his judgment ; if he chooses to champion it as a specimen of dramatic literature I despair of his taste. If further it is his métier to justify the Anglo-Catholic mentality let him beware before he allows himself to question my qualifications for attacking it. He may yet live to learn that emancipation from institutional prejudices is not altogether a disadvantage.

Yours faithfully,

THOMAS GOOD.

In spite of Mr. Good's eulogy of institutional emancipation, I cannot see that his letter, with its somewhat overdone invective, is a very impressive advertisement for the view he is anxious to commend. I hope at least that I may be able to answer his charges without resorting to accusations of universal bias, or to analogies loosely derived from morbid psychology.

In the first place, I do not understand why his statement that he is neither a Groupist nor a Christian Scientist should come as a ' disappointment ' to me. Not only does it come as a relief, but it justifies my use of a queried parenthesis in suggesting his denomination. Secondly, as to the ' greatest of all non sequiturs ' (a good example of the ineffectiveness of a violent phrase) for which he holds me responsible, my aim was not to suggest anything so absurd as that a preference for Goethe and Nietzsche ' argues a socialist bias,' but to discover the particular form of bias which could have induced Mr. Good to reject Dante and Aquinas in favour of Goethe and Nietzsche. For the deliberate selection of these two thinkers argues not an aloof impartiality such as he now assumes, but a definite prepossession in favour of one philosophy rather than another ; and what perplexed me, and still perplexes me, was how to reconcile this marked leaning with the ' apparent ' (Mr. Good will recall my use of this word) socialist

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tone of the review—a tone which incidentally was commented upon by a number of other in Oxford. The truly disinterested person is the enemy of interest in general ; he does not set one interest against another. If, on the other hand, Mr. Good cited these names merely in order to remind Mr. Eliot that other schools of belief besides that represented by Dante and Aquinas have flourished (as he now declares to have been his intention), then I can only say that I think he is being impertinent. Finally, there is not a word in my review to suggest either that *The Rock* is great drama or that I am satisfied with it as an example of religious apologetic ; and may I suggest that Mr. Good's deliberate use of ' spiritual interests ' instead of the more specific term ' salvation ' is a deliberate way of avoiding the issue?

E. W. F. TOMLIN.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

MR. DOS PASSOS ENDS HIS TRILOGY

THE BIG MONEY, by John Dos Passos (Constable, 7/6).

SUMMER WILL SHOW, by Sylvia Townshend Warner (Chatto and Windus, 8/6).

DEATH OF A MAN, by Kay Boyle (Faber and Faber, 7/6).

This is the last volume of the trilogy of which the first two volumes have already been reviewed in *Scrutiny* (Vol. I. No. 2).[1] There is no room here for repetition of the account given there of Mr. Dos Passos's aims and technique, and readers who wish for such an account are accordingly referred back to it. The new volume continues the social history of America from 1919 to the depression: it ends, significantly, with the life-history of Samuel Insull, the power boss whose ruin precipitated the stock market crash and whose prosecution revealed that he had never under-

[1]Reprinted in *For Continuity*.

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stood his financial manipulations or controlled them to any more rational end than temporary personal aggrandisement—' the companies were intertwined in a tangle of relationships no accountant has ever been able to unravel.' After ruining thousands of investors he now enjoys a pension of twenty odd thousand dollars for his services to monopoly ; monopoly capitalism is the power whose operations are exhibited in *The Big Money*.

But the book is not so simple in object as this suggests. Mr. Dos Passos seems to be making many other analogous points, more properly in the novelist's field. Perhaps the most interesting is the exhibition of national degeneration on the moral plane. The pioneer virtues still survive in general parlance, but only as Musical Bank currency, for the Hearsts and the advertisers to work the public through. J. Ward Moorhouse, the public relations counsel, and his highly paid office staff, are shown at the end of the book ' about to launch one of the biggest educational drives the country has ever seen ' to ' roll up a great tidal wave of opinion ' against the Pure Food and Drug Bill (actually recent history) and the campaign is to be run as ' a campaign for Americanism . . . self-service, independence, individualism . . . ' In detailing the life-histories of some of the leading historical figures of this period—Ford, Taylor, Insull—Mr. Dos Passos seems to be saying that this is what the traditional American virtues turn into in a society that can no longer use them for its own profit—for they all started with Benjamin Franklin's virtues and the Puritan rules of conduct. The bankruptcy of the capitalistic society is exhibited in more than economic terms.

It is significant, in Mr. Dos Passos's conception of the recent American scene, that the talented man who was born in it inevitably foundered. If disinterested and decent, he is shown defeated: the case-history of Mary French, social worker and left-wing sympathiser, is preceded by accounts of two historical figures. One is Frank Lloyd Wright

> ' patriarch of the new building,
> not without honour except in his own country '

whose energies are necessarily expended in drafting a Utopian city which could only be built in a society dominated by other motives than those of his contemporaries. The other is Thorstein Veblen

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(best known in England as author of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*) the economist who diagnosed the diseases of capitalism and died frustrated. If on the other hand the talented man elects, like Charley Anderson in the case-histories and the historic Taylor who invented efficiency, to go for ' the big money,' he ends as an oppressor of the workers, enemy of the commonwealth, victim of the stock-market, or at best a hollow worldly success like Dick Savage ' gone in the middle like a rotten pear.' Ford, who believed in the American Plan as the key to national prosperity, ends, richest man in the world,

> ' always afraid of the feet in broken shoes on the roads,
> afraid the gangs will kidnap his grandchildren . . .
> protected by a private army against
> the new America of starved children and hollow bellies
> and cracked shoes stamping on souplines,
> that has swallowed up the old thrifty farmlands.'

The Labour leader G. H. Barrow who has in effect sold out to the bosses lines up here too.

Thus we are initiated into Mr. Dos Passos's conception of ' the two nations ' that the country has now become, the America of the successful and the ' defeated America ' with which he identifies himself. Defeated America, the workers and the men of goodwill, are seen finally at the close of Mary French's life-story being beaten back by the police as they demonstrate against Sacco and Vanzetti's death-sentence ; we are left with ' the voices of the crowds being driven back across the bridge singing: *Arise ye prisoners of starvation.*' There follows an instalment of the subjective device, The Camera Eye, beginning ' they have clubbed us off the streets they are stronger ' and continuing with superb biblical periods in a passage of the rarest kind of good writing—good modern rhetoric. The accounts of Hearst, of the educational campaign in defence of patent-medicines, and of Insull's financial activities follow. The American edition then ends, thus clinching the argument more effectively, with the sketch ' Vag '—the typical youth of the depression period, hungry, broken and workless, trying to get a lift on the road, while overhead the transcontinental plane carries the big business men about their affairs: the two nations inhabit two separate worlds. It is a pity that this neat parable has been denied the English reader, and other omissions in the

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English edition seem no less ill-advised.

Mr. Dos Passos, though not radically ' original ' as a novelist—his debt to Joyce for instance is obvious—is beyond any doubt one of the major American novelists. Hemingway, with whom he is often compared to his disadvantage, and whose technique is at least as much derivative, would not be worth interesting oneself in even if he had been original, so cheap are his emotional formulæ, so second-rate his attitudes, and so limited and monotonous his structural patterns. Mr. Dos Passos uses his predecessors without being parasitic upon them. This was evident as long ago as *Manhattan Transfer*, where his New York and Jimmy Herf are not in the least indebted to Joyce's Dublin and Stephen Daedalus, though his method of presenting them may be. You can see how good this earlier novel is by comparing it with any subsequent attempt at the same thing—*e.g.* Albert Halper's overpraised, harmless but quite unimpressive *Union Square*. Another objection that has been raised to the trilogy is its lack of psychological investigation. It is true that he is no Tolstoy, and that his broad effects are achieved by what looks like a poster technique, but whether the demand for a line of goods that he is not trading in is justifiable the reader must decide for himself. Where complexity of character enters into his scheme—becomes interesting for him in that it affords an illustration of the conflict between the individual and society—Dos Passos can deliver the goods as well as anyone. *The Bitter Drink* is a first-rate piece of character-study, the account of Veblen who

> ' asked too many questions, suffered from a constitutional inability to say yes.
>
> Socrates asked questions, drank down the bitter drink one night when the first cock crowed,
>
> but Veblen
>
> drank it in little sips through a long life in the stuffiness of classrooms, the dust of libraries, the staleness of cheap flats such as a poor instructor can afford. He fought the boyg all right, pedantry, routine, timeservers at office desks, trustees, college-presidents, the plump flunkies of the ruling business-men, all the good jobs kept for yesmen, never enough money, every broadening hope thwarted. Veblen drank the bitter drink all right.'

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And on reading the trilogy as a whole, one perceives a far greater variety of tone, flexibility of style and mastery of material than one had remembered.

What the reader will probably think a demerit worth dwelling upon is the perceptible narrowing of outlook as the trilogy progresses, as the author becomes more sternly concentrated on the politically relevant. High walls seem to have closed in round the reader as he progresses, whereas in the first volume there were openings for glimpses off into other vistas. There was, typically, the moment in the Mexican revolution when Mac the I.W.W. printer goes to the Chamber of Deputies ' to see if he could find anybody he knew. All the doors were open to the street and there were papers littered along the corridors. There was nobody in the theatre but an old Indian and his wife who were walking round hand in hand looking reverently at the gilded ceiling and the paintings and the tables covered with green plush. The old man carried his hat in his hand as if he was in church.' This may look merely like good reporting, but as Coleridge was fond of saying, you can't assemble facts except by the light of your principle of selection. Passages like the above which serve a purely artistic purpose—the recognition of other worlds where different outlooks obtain and different values from those of the novelist—are not to be found in *The Big Money*. Nor are the humorous effects, ranging from the farcical to the sardonic, that enrich the earlier volumes. The latest volume confines itself to displaying a world of boredom and emptiness where the uneasy business man, hounded on by the fearsomely acquisitive American wife, blindly leads a nation into ruin. There are no positives here. The personal lives of the left-wing intellectuals and workers, whether humbugs or heroes, are shown, intentionally or otherwise, as little less disorderly and trashy than those of their class enemies, nor can this be wholly attributable to the society in which they live. One may be forgiven for registering a nostalgia for the lives, orderly and fruitful if not ideologically laudable, of those earlier New England citizens to which Mr. Van Wyck Brooks has opportunely given us all access.[1] Mr. Dos Passos himself will offer only negative

[1] *The Flowering of New England* (Dent, 15/-) will be reviewed in the next number of *Scrutiny*.

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suggestions, explicitly [See p. 421,

> ' For the architect there are only uses . . .
> and needs. (Tell us, doctors of philosophy, what are the needs of a man. At least a man needs to be notjailed notafraid nothungry notcold not without love, not a worker for a power he has never seen
> that cares nothing for the uses and needs of a man or a woman or a child.)']

Mr. Dos Passos's negative propaganda has this advantage, that all men of goodwill must agree with him, and they can respect his earnestness accordingly, as they frequently cannot respect the earnestness of the righteously positive souls. Nor does it incite to the asking of awkward questions, for instance whether such a character and talent as Veblen's would be any better off under Communism than Capitalism—the reader does not have to reflect that the life of a man who suffers from a constitutional inability to say yes would be no less tragic under Communism and probably a lot shorter too.

As for his shortcomings in the matter of literary shop-window dressing, the case of Miss Kay Boyle may well provide food for second thought. Her latest novel, *Death of a Man*, is equally written round national disintegration, revolutionary fervours, hunger and oppression, moreover these themes are advantageously planted in the picturesque Tyrol, adorned with a Hemingway heroine with a Faulkner past and written up regardless of expense. There's richness for you. But re-reading Mr. Dos Passos's trilogy you are likely to thank God for the absence in that of the exquisitely sensitive, the hothouse literary texture, the Woolf-Mansfield personal approach and the Faulkner macabre overtone. Another touchstone of the same kind is provided by Miss Sylvia Townshend Warner's new novel *Summer Will Show*. America is fortunate in having a novelist whose work makes that of our contemporary Bloomsbury school and its Paris-American affiliation look both frivolous and pinchbeck.

Q. D. Leavis.

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ENTERTAINMENT LITERATURE

ANTIGUA, PENNY, PUCE, by Robert Graves (Seizin-Constable, 7/6).

'A writer has to make up his mind in which of three ways he is writing . . . The first way is to give the public what it wants, just as it wants it—the method of the popular entertainer' writes Mr. Graves early on in his novel. Then he describes a second method—'writing without any consideration for the taste of the public'—by which is produced of course what we call art, and a third method—'the third sort of writing the sort that tries to feed the public what he thinks the public will think it ought to like because it's just a little superior'—that is, Book Society novels. Mr. Graves makes no secret that he is trying his hand at popular entertainment, and we hope he succeeds enough to make it worth his while to carry on with the good work. For it is good work of its kind. Mr. Graves is the rare workman for whom to know what he is doing is not a source of cynical corruption, but of clarification. In spite of a poor opening chapter, once the novel gets going it is steadily entertaining and often very funny. *Antigua, Penny, Puce* is the novel that in Heaven the low-brow buys at the railway bookstall to read while travelling and leaves behind him in the train (One hopes that a sixpenny edition will appear in this world). Mr. Graves has all the fertility in concocting intrigues that we expect of the best detective-storymongers, and a much greater nimbleness of wit than they can supply. One is persuaded that Mr. Graves could turn out a stream of such novels, so high-spirited is his performance, without exhausting his resources.

The case for a literature of entertainment that is distinct from Literature has yet to be put convincingly. But most people I suppose would be prepared to agree as a start that it must not interfere with or militate against serious literature, at any rate. If you read a good many of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse's novels you carry away the impression that poetry and art are a joke, and in their contemporary manifestations, invariably practised by bogus characters. This is no doubt merely part of the Public-school heritage, but biases of this kind and worse can be located in most 'merely entertaining' fiction. Mr. Graves has a bias in the anti-

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public-school-heritage direction, which provides much richer humour than Mr. Wodehouse's. In the list of entertainments for leisure associated with literature—cross-word puzzles, competitions in the literary weeklies, biographical cruces of Sherlock Holmes and other mythological figures, and (getting warmer) anecdotage about Johnson and Elia, detective stories, magazines—Mr. Graves's new novel stands easily at the top.

Q.D.L.

MUSIC IN EDUCATION

MUSIC : THE CHILD AND THE MASTERPIECE, by Percy A. Scholes (O.U.P., 12/6).

Mr. Scholes has written a very large book, which he modestly terms ' a comprehensive handbook of aims and methods in all that is usually called " Musical Appreciation." ' It should be a best-seller ; for it throws sops not only to Cerberus but to the entire populations of both sides of the Styx. Of the methods of Musical Appreciation we can now have no doubt ; its exact aim, I am afraid, still remains a little vague. Apparently the hungry masses are to be evangelized, but by what gospel the eye of faith alone can detect. Mr. Scholes himself seems to envisage some broad popular appeal, well seasoned with anecdotes and most tender of the untechnical stomach. The instruction is to be set to a wooing note, since in this enlightened world there is no true darkness of ignorance but only the dim light of a torch lacking in technicalities ; and this, after all, can be largely remedied by agreeing that the snobbery of the craftsman's terms are comparatively unimportant. Cut the clumsy cant, and we can all get down to plain men's classes on the University Extension model, or even the level of books on ' How to Drive a Car,' ' How to Apply for a Situation,' ' How to Pray (' There are separate volumes on " How to Pray Well," " How to Pray Always " '). Undoubtedly the plain man must be having a strenuous time and will welcome the comparative peace of learning to listen to music.

Mr. Scholes has a serious problem to tackle, and there are several suggestive quotations in his book to show that some people in different parts of the country are trying to solve it. Many of

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his own ideas are good, if one can disregard a certain ingenuousness (does anybody fit to teach anything about music need to be reminded that *Passing By* is not by the great Purcell, or *God Save the King* by Henry Carey?). The trouble is that his sound ideas evaporate so quickly ; and a drowning civilization needs solider life-preservers.

The problem is stated clearly at the beginning of the historical section in the words of the admirable Burney, who remarks: 'There have been many treatises published on the art of musical composition and performance but none to instruct ignorant lovers of music how to listen or to judge for themselves.' Very sensible ; but the ensuing lines show clearly that what Burney wanted was musical criticism as distinct from practical guides for composers and performers. He did not propose to make it easy for listeners. 'There is,' he avers, 'a degree of refinement, delicacy, and invention which the lovers of simple and common Music can no more comprehend than the Asiatics harmony.' His illustration that a syllogism could only be followed by those with a knowledge of logic is not very encouraging to the popular lecturer. What he felt necessary was a maintenance of contacts between the musician and the public who had some acquaintance with music ; and he was by no means the first to feel that. Roger North, writing about 1700, remarked that music had become so much more complicated in his own lifetime a large number of amateurs could not properly understand its latest developments. In fact he explains that it was falling more and more into the hands of professionals. The effect of the public concert was then just beginning to make itself noticed ; for we must remember that concerts go back no further than the Restoration. Before that music was either for the few choirs that practised church music or for amateurs. Madrigals could be sung in the home ; even the lute and keyboard works were mainly on popular tunes and so could be followed, if not always played, by almost anybody. It was theatrical music that first created an entirely separate public for music. And the segregation has been intensified in the two centuries that have elapsed since Roger North's time. Moreover, a new difficulty has been added with industrialism. The simple and common music of Burney was not violently hostile to all learned music stood for. Dr. Pepusch did not perjure his immortal soul by arranging the

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tunes in *The Beggar's Opera*. Commercial machinery has stratified the public by feeding technically clever inanities to masses that have lost the capacity to create or transmit any traditional music. The Jews can only preserve their self-respect by having no dealings with the Samaritans.

In such conditions a little optimism and good humour will not go far. The ardour of the revolutionary is needed. And I fear that what the music teacher too often lacks is the thoroughgoing conviction of the revolutionist. He sees his problem too isolated from those of his colleagues, and they generally give him poor encouragement to see it otherwise. In a society where things are so obviously more valued than minds, contempt for the musician is sure to be normal ; there could hardly be a more useless person from the point of view of big business. That explains why the Cambridgeshire Committee on Musical Education found boys' secondary schools the most backward in music teaching ; for the pupils of these schools must earn a living. In the co-educational secondary schools boys usually finish their musical training with the change of voice ; one sign among many that these schools certainly do not exist to further sex-equality. The musician must either accept inferiority or fight against society. He can and should take every opportunity, not necessarily by formal instruction, to point out how commercial exploitation of bad music is possible. Much of the essential propaganda should be correlated with history and literature : it could then be made clear why some ages produce great music and some do not. A knowledge of English social conditions before the Industrial Revolution is as essential to an understanding of folk-music as to an understanding of Bunyan ; in both cases a folk culture is involved that depends on economic conditions and a living tradition. Unfortunately history is the deadest and most useless subject in the present curriculum. But in the meantime a suggestion of Dr. Cyril Norwood is worth more consideration than Mr. Scholes gives it. Bad popular music could very effectively be analysed, and the pupil should be told why a teacher is not a snob when he refuses to tune in to Henry Hall.

Such negative teaching, however, is secondary to positive. What is really needed is continuous music teaching right through the schools from the infant department to the secondary sixth form. I have no faith in the simple anecdotal analysis of master-

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pieces that the musical appreciation exponents desiderate. I cannot see why music should be treated more frivolously than any other subject. No reader of *Scrutiny* needs any argument to convince him that real understanding of music opens a uniquely valuable mode of experience. In this respect the emphasis of the Board of Education Inspectorate in recent years has been sound and helpful. I notice too that the practical teachers Mr. Scholes quotes are on the whole giving a much more strenuous and complete education than he himself seems to outline. Mr. Milner, for instance, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne Royal Grammar School will not begin his sixth form work without a sketch of harmony at the keyboard. He begins with knowledge, not appreciation. And I am certain that a fairly thorough study of music is necessary for even good listening. Above all we do not want to train listeners apart from makers of music. A real sympathy with music is something active, never something passive.

This sound forbidding, but the child will grow into it. I have never found a boy appalled by difficulties if his interests are engaged. In the infant school he can start with percussion bands, and the singing class is always a valuable part of musical training. Later on choral societies can be formed, bringing in the staff to help out the tenor and bass parts, and some large performance, a concert or an opera, often arouses permanent interest, especially among those who take part. But in the class ear training and sight reading must be worked at in easy stages. Mr. Scholes doubts whether it is worth while to spend time on the latter, since few can hope to read scores proficiently. Of course, one is hampered by the large classes imposed on the teacher ; but with sufficient time it is surprising what progress can be made, and without an elementary knowledge of score-reading no one can be said to be musically educated. If boys can be taught the piano they cannot be hopeless as potential score readers. Indeed this is one of many advantages of a school orchestra, that it teaches them to read more quickly and excites their desire to read a full score.

This may be said to be the grammar of music ; and Mr. Scholes is right in saying we cannot read Shakespeare from a knowledge of grammar. From the earliest stages, however, boys should be encouraged to make music for themselves. Many teachers analyse

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simple tunes as they are sung, and the boys can then compose tunes of their own on the same model. The next thing to learn is what to do with their tunes. Mr. Milner, I notice, takes a tune like the *British Grenadiers* and handles it in various ways as a composer might do. If boys have been taught to read and write music from the beginning, as they are taught to read and write language, they can compose simple variations for themselves. When their voices change there is an ample opportunity to introduce elementary harmony. Then will come the time for analysis of the larger works of the masters. If there is an orchestra in the school they will already be familiar with the rudiments of orchestration.

All this may sound ambitious, but it is being attempted by teachers all over the country. What is needed is more time and more support from the teachers of other subjects. It is at any rate only by such a continuous course that a musical generation can be produced ; indeed without such an education music is very likely to disappear altogether as a serious art. We cannot expect a boy to appreciate a Bach cantata, but we can give him the ear and eye training that will enable him to grow into an understanding of its beauties. Music is like any other art ; a strenuous training is needed for intelligent and critical response. The training need not be dull if it provides opportunities for doing definite pieces of work by the way. The general standard of teaching in music is now much improved in the schools. Its necessity is to avoid popular and easy methods of producing listeners instead of active participants and to realize that its problems are similar to the cultural problems of other subjects. Give children good tunes to sing and play, surround them with music adapted to their age and teach them to read and compose simple music: that is the programme, and there is no short cut by musical appreciation. The trouble about our educational system is not that it is above the heads of children but that it is unworthy of their attention. A book like the *Cambridgeshire Report on Music Teaching,* with its graded suggestions on practical work, is more useful than a library of books on musical appreciation. It is encouraging that such schemes are being generally adopted. The duty of the general public is to see they are not negatived by the crude impression that it does not matter what rubbish corrupts the ear.

BRUCE PATTISON.

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MARXISM AND THE MODERN MOOD

FROM HEGEL TO MARX, by Sidney Hook (Gollancz, 10/6)

KARL MARX, by Franz Mehring (The Bodley Head, 15/-).

WHAT MARX REALLY MEANT, by G. D. H. Cole (Gollancz, 5/-).

MARXISM, by J. Middleton Murry, John Macmurray, N. A. Holdaway and G. D. H. Cole (Chapman and Hall, 5/-).

THE COMMUNIST ANSWER TO THE WORLD'S NEEDS, by Julius Hecker (Chapman and Hall, 8/6).

The above list of books represents not so much a selection as an accumulation. Any order that it may possess, any tendency that it may serve to illustrate, will therefore be largely the result of accident. But there is one kind of tendency which an accumulation may exhibit to perfection, and that is a tendency to variety. Mr. Hook's approach is that of the scholar, Franz Mehring's that of the apologist, Mr. Cole's that of the intelligent guide, Dr. Hecker's that of the propagandist, Professor Macmurray's that of the philosopher, and Mr. Middleton Murry's that of Mr. Middleton Murry. Taken together, they ought to be able to tell us something about Marxism as a force in the modern world; taken separately—and this applies above all to the last two—they will at least tell us something of the psychology of individual marxists.

One is tempted to think that the study of Professor Hook—for our purposes quite the most important volume on the list—is likely to receive a warmer welcome from critics of Marx than from disciples. Not only is it the kind of book that everyone, whether for or against Marx, has been waiting for, but also it is the kind of book that certain persons cannot have been awaiting without apprehension. For its aim is to conduct a rigorous analysis into the origins of Marx's thought, and those who prefer to swallow their divine revelation whole may find this book both irritating and unnecessary. Some years ago Mr. E. F. Carritt, one of the most acute and painstaking of academic philosophers, delivered at Oxford a series of lectures on Dialectical Materialism. The subject was new, though a previous generation of undergraduates

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had been privileged to hear Mr. H. W. B. Joseph, the distinguished logician, mercilessly dissect the Labour Theory of Value. The first lecture was, as lectures go, well-attended, conspicuous among the audience being members of the left-wing political clubs. But Mr. Carritt obviously intended to go into the matter pretty deeply ; he was there, it soon became apparent, not so much to preach a gospel as to understand the precise meaning of a theory ; and the more rigorously he revealed the dry bones of his subject, the thinner grew the audience, among the first to absent themselves being the ultra-radicals. Finally, if I remember rightly, the regular audience was reduced to three: an undergraduette of uncertain political complexion, a well-known contributor to this journal, Mr. H. A. Mason, and myself. Whether a similar situation occurred when the course was repeated a year or two later, I do not know ; but it struck me at the time as being highly significant. One can never be sure, in other words, how much influence a philosophy may derive from the fact that it is imperfectly understood.

An interesting subject of speculation is how a philosopher (for we have got to reckon Marx as a philosopher) who claimed to be the first to base his social theories upon scientific fact (' it is the examination and definition of fact, with a view to achieving an otherwise utopian idea, that constitutes the essential scientific work of Karl Marx,' says Max Eastman), should have been the inspiration of so much that he would have described as ideology, and so little that can be called truly scientific in the way of economic analysis. I do not think this problem admits of an easy solution, but a hint at a solution may possibly be found in the fact that, unlike a number of other modern writers on society, Marx was neither a scientist nor a scientific materialist by temperament. By temperament—if the word does not cover too much to have meaning—Marx was a religious prophet ; and it cannot be altogether an accident that most of the distinguished social theorists of recent times—Herbert Spencer, Sorel, Pareto and (in our own day) Major Douglas—were originally trained as engineers. By conviction, moreover, Marx was not an old-fashioned materialist like his friend Engels, but what we should to-day call an instrumentalist. There were, in fact, two distinct sides to his character: on the one hand, there was the materialist philosopher of the Hegelian Left, and on the other, there was the exile from the Ghetto. Perhaps it is

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not untrue to say that all his life Marx was an exile ; and an exile who consciously remains an exile and does not degenerate into a mere absentee, proves that he is still influenced by the faith of his fathers. Generalizations on the subject of race, particularly the Jewish race, are of very little use to psychology and an intolerable nuisance to political science, but it would be a remarkable coincidence if there were not some relation between the philosophy of Spinoza, with its dichotomy between Substance or God as *causa sui* and the modifications or ' modes ' of this Substance which are finite and unreal in themselves ; the philosophy of Sigmund Freud, with its distinction between fundamental Instincts which alone are ' real,' and the rationalizations, substitutions, transferences, displacements and sublimitations which are the ' illusory ' reflections of these Instincts ; and the philosophy of Karl Marx with its distinction between material or economic ' reality ' and the ideological ' forms '—juridical, political, religious, artistic and philosophical—by which, in Marx's own words, ' men become aware of the conflict and fight it out.' There is all the difference, it seems to me, between a conception of Substance such as Locke entertained, where little or no implication of value is present, and that of Spinoza—difficult as this latter is to grasp ; the *ding an sich* of Kant, which might be cited at this point, is too complicated for comparison.

I said that there were two distinct sides to Marx's character ; I do not wish to imply that the two can be separated. My purpose here, in fact, is to demonstrate the contrary ; to show how perfectly they were united, and to discover, if possible, the principle of unification. This principle of unification, the influence of which upon the development of Marx's theories is so great that it deserves the additional title of principle of development, is contained, I believe, in Marx's theory of history. But in order to explain how this is so, it will be necessary to go back a few centuries.

Since the close of the middle ages, there have existed in Europe two main schools of philosophical thought: the Cartesian and the Kantian. The first, recognizing as its manifesto or constitution the *Discours de la Méthode*, established the prestige of natural science ; the second, recognizing as its manifesto or constitution the *Critique of Pure Reason*, established (though at a much later time) the prestige of history. And in order to forestall criticism, both these

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statements, it is as well to add, may be regarded as highly simplified. Of the two movements, the Cartesian was, at first at any rate, the more successful. It succeeded so well, in fact, that instead of philosophy continuing to dictate to natural science, natural science began to dictate to philosophy ; until finally the methodology of philosophy and that of natural science became almost indistinguishable. Only in comparatively recent years, indeed, has philosophy succeeded in cutting itself loose from this subservience to science ; and the reaction—a reaction not so much to Kant as to principles first adduced by the Kantian school—has in most cases taken the form of a renewed interest in problems of historiography.[1] The development of the Kantian school itself, though both rapid and intense, was, in view of the important work accomplished, remarkably short-lived ; barely fifty years separate the publication of the *Critique* from the death of Hegel. Now it is not true to say that Kantianism died with Hegel. What is true is to say that with Hegel only a part of Kantianism was ever reborn ; the other part—the anti-historical part—did not die, because it had never lived. Kant's attitude to history was, with very little modification, that of the eighteenth century ; and the eighteenth century—the century which, as Sorel brilliantly demonstrated in his *Illusions du progrès*, created the myth of automatic progress—was in the habit of regarding all earlier phrases of culture as imperfect manifestations of the same causes as produced the later. Now this was simply another way of saying that whereas all previous centuries had aimed at being the eighteenth century, only the eighteenth century has so far succeeded. Such an attitude to history—an attitude which empties the past of all meaning by reducing it to a series of unsuccessful experiments—was essentially sterile ; and the reaction came with men of genuine historical imagination such as Lessing and Herder. With Hegel, the reaction took the form both of a more concrete attitude to thought and of renewed interest in the thought of the past ; and thus the first great philosopher of history (if we exclude Vico, of whose work Hegel, like most of his contemporaries, was ignorant) is also the first great historian of philosophy.

[1]The subservience is still marked, however, in the tendency to treat historical processes as if they were natural processes.

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We are only concerned with Hegel, however, in so far as he was the precursor of Marx. In what sense, then, was Marx the disciple of Hegel? The answer to this question naturally falls into two portions.

The distinction between Nature and Spirit in Hegel's philosophy is of fundamental importance. Both terms, that is to say, represent concrete realities ; they do not stand for abstract aspects of one reality. But if they represent concrete realities, they cannot be regarded as ' opposites ' in the sense in which Hegel uses the term ; and where there are no ' opposites,' there can be ' synthesis of opposites.' Nature and Spirit in Hegel's philosophy thus form an irreconcilable dualism—a dualism which the introduction of a third term, the Logos, does nothing to resolve ; and the existence of this dualism, whose presence made itself increasingly felt as the thought of Hegel was pondered by disciples, became ultimately responsible for the bifurcation of Hegelanism into a Left and a Right. But there was also another reason, not unrelated to the above, for the appearance of this split ; it arose in connection with Hegel's famous statement that ' the real is the rational and the rational is the real.'

To say that the Rational is the Real is to say one thing, and to say that the Real is the Rational is to say another ; but to say both at once is to run the risk of saying one thing to one person and another thing to another at the same time, or two things to the same person at different times. ' The emphasis on the *whole* in Hegel, on man *as such* in Feuerbach, made it difficult to re-make, re-do or reform existence,' says Professor Hook. For if the Real is already the Rational, our duty is obviously to keep it so ; and the true philosophy will be conservatism. If the Rational alone is Real, on the other hand, Rationality, if not actually existing, must be induced to exist by means of reform or revolution. Hence arose the Hegelian Left, whose child is Marxism. The Right, in emphasizing the transcendent element of the system, interpreted the Logos theistically as a personal God ; the Left, in emphasizing the immanent aspect of the system, paved the way for an energizing, activist or dialectical materialism. This divergence of interpretation, which is clear to us who cannot avoid to some extent reading history backwards, was not necessarily clear to those in whose mind the conflict took place. Had it been so, the error

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of mistaking an abstract aspect for a concrete reality would never have occurred ; a conscious error is no longer an error, it is incapable of deception. What happened—and this is where the deception was involved—was that each party, believing but half the phrase, invoked the whole of it. And this is the way an error goes about its business ; it occupies one room, but it rents the entire house.

We are now in a position to realize something of the novelty and importance of Marx's often-quoted phrase that ' philosophers have merely interpreted the world in various ways, the thing is to change it.' And this introduces us to our second point: Marx's use of the Hegelian dialectic. We may express the dualism we have just discussed in two ways: either as a dualism between a Rationality that was real and a Rationality that could be realized ; or as a dualism between a Reality that was rational and a Reality that could be rationalized. This is clear enough, and may even sound a little obvious ; but not so clear and certainly not so obvious is the fact that these two versions of the dualism correspond to two possible versions of the dialectic itself. The dialectic may be regarded from two points of view: either as an account of the behaviour of things, or as an account of the way we come to understand the behaviour of things ; either as the way things behave, or as the way we behave with regard to things. With Hegel, these two aspects are indistinguishable, or at least can only be distinguished ideally ; but it was natural for him to place an emphasis on the second. Marx, in claiming to have turned the dialectic ' right-side up,' naturally tended to emphasize the first: ' it is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence,' he wrote, ' but on the contrary it is their social existence which determines their consciousness.' Now it is clear, I think, that an emphasis upon the realizability of Reason or the rationalizability of Reality does not exactly correspond with an interpretation of the dialectic whereby thought or consciousness come to be regarded as somehow ' dictated ' by material conditions ; for if thought loses its initiative, how is reality to be changed, and changed for the better? To say that our actions are determined not by ourselves but by our ' social environment ' (which is the contention of ethical determinism) is to say something not merely untrue but meaningless—which is possibly the reason why men can go on saying it with impunity. For if our actions are determined by something

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other than ourselves, they are not *our* actions ; and to say that they are *partly* determined by something other than ourselves is merely to advance the tautology that all our actions are actions within a particular context ; and the particularity of the context, it is as well to remember, is that which makes an action ' this particular action '—it is not something that bridles or ' inhibits ' activity.

This, I suggest, is the inconsistency which lies at the root of Marx's thought, and I do not think it is an inconsistency that can be slurred over. Whether the Master of Balliol would still adhere to his explanation of Marx's materialism in terms of an insistence upon *action,* I do not know ; the book in which the view was put forward, *Karl Marx's Capital,* is largely superseded by the books on our list. All I know is that you cannot easily reconcile an insistence upon the primacy of matter, which ultimately leads to the denial of all values, even so-called ' material values ' (whatever they may be), and an insistence upon the importance both of human action, which presupposes the freedom of the will, and the supreme value and necessity of changing the world, which presupposes something more than a naturalistic ethics. There would seem to be only two ways of dealing with this paradox: to deny its existence, as the majority of Marxians have done, or to account for its existence, as we must try to do here.

I referred at the beginning to the conflict in Marx's character between the officially-materialist philosopher and the Hebrew prophet. I do not intend to say now that where the materialist philosopher left off, the Hebrew prophet took over ; for that would not explain the remarkable union between the two. What I prefer to say is that the existence of the latent Hebrew prophet was the cause of the philosopher being only *officially* materialist. For there is an ' apocalyptic ' strain in Marx's thought that he inherited neither from Hegel nor from Feuerbach, but from his ancestors ; and it is this apocalyptic element which accounts both for his emphasis on activity and for his dynamic view of the historical process itself.

The dialectic, in one of its aspects, is an account, as we have seen, of the way things come into being ; to the absolute idealist, in fact, it is nothing short of ' reality in the making.' Now whether or not the dialectic is a valid instrument of thought, the point of it is lost if you treat what is in the making as already

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made ; or rather, *if* you treat what is in the making as ready-made—if, that is to say, you claim to be able to ' anticipate ' the future phases of the process—you cannot legitimately call the result dialectic. It is a case of keeping to the rules, or calling the game by a different name. Secondly, the purpose of the dialectical process is to account for the phenomenon of change ; change gives it meaning and it gives meaning to change ; consequently, to speak of this process as having an *end* is nonsensical. Now it was Marx's claim not only to have anticipated the future stages of the dialectical process, but also to have shown how the process could be brought to a conclusion ; and this is to falsify the dialectic. Nor will it do to say that he was merely adapting the dialectic to his own purposes ; he certainly was, but he was adapting it into something other than dialectic. You are at liberty to call this other thing what you please, but why not call it just prophecy? Marx's account of the rise of Capitalism out of the negation of primitive communism was the work of a historian, and of a historian of genius ; but his prophecy of the rise of Communism out of the negation of capitalism, and therefore out of the negation of a negation, was a piece of sheer ' apocalypticism ' without a shred of justification in his theory of history.[1] According to Hegel, there is no history apart from the history of the State ; and he defines the State in the *Philosophie des Rechts* as ' der Gang Gottes in der Welt,' the progress of God in the world. To Marx, on the other hand, the State was nothing but an ' instrument of class-domination ' ; and thus the Hegelian view that all history is the history of the State is paralleled by the Marxist view that all history is the history of class-struggle. Now Marx's avowed aim was to bring the class-struggle to an end ; and since the State was the instrument by which class-struggle was maintained, to eliminate class-struggle was equivalent to eliminating the State. But to eliminate the State was to eliminate the only subject-matter of history ; and thus to bring the State to an end was equivalent to bringing history to an end. Of the classless society that followed the ' expropriation of the expropriators,' as of the primitive communism that preceded the rise of capitalism, no history was

[1]The historian as such, I assume, has no gift of prophecy. He cannot know the future in any sense. If he could, the word knowledge would lose all meaning.

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possible ; for a perfect society, whether it be paradise or the garden of Eden, must inevitably be static and therefore outside the historical process. In short, we have here not a naturalistic philosopher but a prophet—the author not of a theory but of a gospel.

Of the five books on our list, four at least are concerned with the gospel ; and the fifth—that of Mr. Cole—has little or no meaning, it seems to me, apart from the gospel. In writing a book on what Marx really meant, Mr. Cole is no doubt correct in his assumption that Marx never really meant to be anything more than a scientific analyst of capitalist society ; the fact remains both that he was more and that he has since become more to many millions for whom economics means nothing at all. Similarly, in writing a book on the communist answer to the world's needs, Dr. Hecker seems often to forget that the correctness of this answer will depend upon the needs in question ; but he is certainly right in his assumption that communism is the answer to our needs if we really need so little as all that. I think that both Professor Macmurray and Mr. Middleton Murry come nearer the truth when they say that we need nothing less than a New Man ; though I wish that these two writers would rid themselves of the notion that we waited for them to say it, just as I wish that they could be persuaded of the insufficiency of saying nothing else. One is tempted to conclude with the observation that nothing is less in the spirit of Marx the economist, and more in the spirit of Marx the prophet, than contemporary Marxism. For if it was Marx's claim to have transformed a utopian dream into a scientific reality, then his present disciples are utopians through and through. Whereas Marx, realizing the inadequacy of the utopia-mongering of Fourier and Proudhon, turned to what he believed to be rigorous scientific analysis, the modern Marxians, realizing (and rightly) the inadequacy of much of Marx's scientific analysis, have turned once more to utopia-mongering ; and the only extenuation of their mistake is the fact that Marx, no doubt unconsciously (but it was in his blood) made it first. Marxism as it exists to-day—or perhaps, in fairness to the officials at Moscow, we should say Marxism as it exists between the covers of the books on our list—is therefore the most effective of all criticisms of Marx ; for in trying to be truly Marxist, it succeeds only in being Marxist heresy. But if it is heresy, it is Marx's own heresy—the heresy which, by infusing

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the dead orthodoxy of historical materialism with living sap, has already transformed the life of one-sixth of the world.

E. W. F. TOMLIN.

NEW WRITING, edited by John Lehmann, Nos. 1 and 2, John Lane (The Bodley Head, 6/- each).

Malcolm Cowley ended his *Exile's Return* with the hope and trust that a great number of contemporary writers will take the workers' side for 'so doing will make them better artists.' They would have on their side 'ordinary people who have never heard of Chaucer, and dress without taste when they don't dress shabbily, and eat their food with smacking noises and pile cups and saucers on top of their plates to show that the meal is over. They are people without manners or distinction, Negroes, hill billies, poor whites, Jews, Wops and Hunkies.' To side with them can offer 'an end to the desperate feeling of solitude and uniqueness that has been oppressing artists for the last two centuries, the feeling that has reduced the best of them to silence or futility and the weaker ones to insanity or suicide. It can offer instead a sense of comradeship and participation in an historical process vastly bigger than the individual.' 'Values exist again, after an age in which they seemed to be lost; good and evil are embodied in men who struggle.' 'Tragedy lives in the lives of the men now dying in Chinese streets or in German prisons for a cause by which their lives are given dignity and meaning. Artists used to think that the world outside had become colourless and dull in comparison with the bright inner world they had so tenderly nourished; now it is the inner world that has been enfeebled as a result of its isolation; it is the outer world that is strong and colourful and demands to be imaginatively portrayed. The subjects are waiting everywhere. There are great days ahead for artists if they can survive in the struggle and keep their honesty of vision and learn to measure themselves by the stature of their times.'

The two handsomely got-up volumes of *New Writing* make no such extravagant claims. '*New Writing*,' says the Manifesto, 'is first and foremost interested in literature, and though it does not intend to open its pages to writers of reactionary or fascist sentiments, it is independent of any political party.' 'Prose will form the main bulk of the contributions.' Yet in spite of the Manifesto the contents provide an interesting commentary on the remarks

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of Malcolm Cowley. Most of the contributions, some of which are excerpts from longer works, do 'deal with' ordinary people, Negroes and Wops, men dying in China and Germany, the workers, in short, as envisaged by Malcolm Cowley. Then before we come to the stories, there are little notes about the contributors, giving their Left credentials. Thus, 'André Chamson is the guiding spirit of the Parisian weekly review *Vendredi*, started last year, and now one of the most important cultural papers supporting the *Front Populaire*.' 'Leslie Halward was born in Birmingham 31 years ago. He started work at the age of 15, and has been diesinker, toolmaker, labourer and plasterer. He began to write seriously in 1932, when on the dole, and published his first collection of short stories, *To Tea on Sunday*, early this year.'

But though there are more than thirty writers here who have taken the workers' side, they are all deficient as *artists*. The one piece of imaginative writing, of convincing creation, is by André Chamson, and has no overt relation to his journalist work or to a political subject. It is a study of adolescence in a rural setting. So far is a political attitude from being an asset in writing of this sort, it actually presents peculiar difficulties. There is the common one of insufficient insight into and familiarity with the life of working men. (Though it is only fair to say that the grosser examples of sentimentality and obtuseness come from the writers who have lived from childhood amongst the people they attempt to describe). Then, the 'inner world' is handled gingerly; those who present their case from their own point of view directly reveal themselves uneasy and embarrassed, those who use a *persona* confine themselves to a meagre and superficial standard, though genuine as far as it goes.

The distinctive merit of the best writing is that of the *reporter*. True, it is reporting for a vaguely Left audience, but given the initial attitude, Malcolm Cowley's outer world is in generous variety faithfully recorded. It is only in the inferior pieces that the wish or the prejudice gets the better of what is actually there.

Good prose literature, then, is as scarce as ever. But the integrity which has gone into these campaign documents, representative as they are of almost every important country in the world, is capable of doing a service, but it is a service which is primarily social and political.

H. A. MASON.

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HENRY ADAMS

MONT-SAINT-MICHEL AND CHARTRES, by Henry Adams (Constable and Co., Ltd., 1936; 12/6 net).

The two best known works of Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* and *The Education of Henry Adams*, were brought out privately about 1905, for the entertainment of his friends, who gave them a sufficient reputation to make public editions necessary. By now they are generally regarded as American classics, an opinion which is doubtless just but nonetheless chilling. Both of them are distinguished books, and *The Education*, especially, deserves to be brought out of its atmosphere of aloofness.

Adams' intention in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* was to consider as a whole the different manifestations of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and—mainly by emphasizing the attitude of each group towards God or the Virgin—to prove the spiritual unity of the period, and in some measure to define the emotions which made it up. The two cathedrals which give the book its title account for only about half of the matter ; later chapters deal with the Schools, the mystics, and St. Thomas Aquinas, who paralleled the architects' work by building the Church Intellectual. He takes up one mundane aspect of the period as well, the efforts of women to refine manners ; again what he emphasizes is the similarity of attitude, the unity, of the people involved.

In the chapters about Chartres, which is discussed at the greater length, it is the coercive influence of the Virgin which Adams insists upon, that her presence was felt to be real in a very simple sense, and that her personal tastes were respected in the planning and decorating of the cathedral. The chapels which give off the apse, for instance, were not arranged in a neat and mathematical fashion, not in a ' masculine ' fashion, but rather the space was so distributed as to make possible the intimate relation between the Virgin and her worshippers. This is more than an imaginative exaggeration, of course, even in the case of Chartres, but Adams apparently felt he had to risk a great deal if he hoped to bring modern readers to realize the Mediæval emotions.

> ' If it were allowed to paraphrase Viollet-le-Duc's words into a more or less emotional or twelfth-century form, one might say, after him, that, compared with Paris or Laon, the Chartres

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apse shows the same genius that is shown in the Chartres rose ; the same large mind that overrules—the same strong will that defies difficulties. The Chartres apse is as entertaining as all the other Gothic apses together, because it overrides the architect. You may, if you really have no imagination whatever, reject the idea that the Virgin herself made the plan ; the feebleness of our fancy is now congenital, organic, beyond stimulant or strychnine, and we shrink like sensitive plants from the touch of a vision or spirit ; but at least one can still sometimes feel a woman's taste, and in the apse of Chartres one feels nothing else.' (p. 127).

The informal tone towards the reader, one almost of cajolery, can be seen here, and also the fact that the book is definitely an ' interpretation ' or ' appreciation ' as well as a history. There is a vitality and solidity in the manner, as in everything Adams wrote. Certain difficulties of his style, however, are perhaps not fairly represented. Although he uses no architectural jargon, there are ellipses and abstractions which demand some nimbleness from the reader. His tendency to be aphoristic occasionally leads one to believe that he is saying something more important than he is. But he can also be repetitive, and at times longwinded. That he had in interest in ' form ' he admits ; but he seems to have had as well almost an obsession on the subject of Unity, which may have affected his literary manner. It is not impossible that when he took a subject—Apses, say—and illustrated and compared at great length, from time to time repeating the central thesis of the chapter, he had the impression that he was forging unity out of multiplicity. It makes hard going, and fortunately is true only of the first half-dozen chapters.

Adams does not claim that worship and unity of feeling is always a question of innate nobility. For many the Virgin was quite frankly a means to an end, either benefits on this earth, or Heaven. When the bourgeoisie gave vast sums of money to help build the cathedrals, it was for them an economic speculation like another.

There are two objection to *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres.* The first can best be illustrated by the kind of remark which the book has brought forth. On several occasions those remarks were simply gush. Adams seems to have argued so successfully for the

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twelfth century's state of mind, to have described the beauties of Chartres not only so vividly but with such charm on his own account, that for some readers the book has an effect resembling that of pre-Raphaelite poetry. This manner of dealing with their subject has caused some professional architects to sniff, despite the fact that the first public edition of the book was sponsored by the American Institute of Architects.

A far more fundamental objection might be felt by some, who were not annoyed or distracted by the aspect of Adams' manner which is mentioned above, and who would be willing to admit that the whole effort had a considerable distinction, but who feel that, as history, the book is something of a blind-alley. It should not be a paradox if one says that the book, despite the fact that it is vivid, gives an impression of remoteness: it is a closed circle, to which Yeats' early verse might be a parallel ; and Adams seems perfectly content that it should be so. After stating the nature of the certain feelings which played an important part in the period, the only abstract conclusion he draws is that the period was unified. This does not seem very helpful, nor very interesting. Perhaps the point of view behind the objection is too limited, perhaps it ' dates ' just as the book itself does ; nevertheless, the modern reader, the more he feels that Adams was an admirably intelligent man, the more he will be likely to be disappointed with Adams' approach. The book not only leads to no interesting speculation, it seems almost to stifle it. It is far indeed from history or philosophy of such contemporary interest as *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, or *The Secret of the Golden Way*, to cite examples which are sufficiently different to give the objection a broad basis.

Adams had a favourite thesis, which he called the Dynamic Theory of History, according to which he assumed nothing ' to be true or untrue, except relation.' He wanted to take two periods in history, state their natures as exactly as possible, and then by means of these two ' points of relation,' he would be able to measure intervening motion. So the *Mont-Saint-Michel* was the child of the Dynamic Theory of History, and insofar as one finds historical relativism, the mere measuring of motion, uninteresting, to that extent will the book be considered, in the end, a blind-alley. The point can be mentioned again, in connection with *The Education of Henry Adams*.

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The Education has undoubtedly a wider interest. At its simplest, as a discerning picture of nineteenth century England and America, it is valuable ; there is also Adams himself, revealed in the manner, which contributes to the interest, and there is his attempt to fit himself into the world.

He was born in 1838, in New England, and brought up in an atmosphere—more eighteenth century than nineteenth—of refinement and simplicity, an atmosphere of belief in abstract ideals and in the essential goodness of mankind, of traditional opposition to bankers and to utilitarian morality. His family and their friends were politicians, or more exactly statesmen ; it was a time when people took it for granted that the most capable and intelligent man should represent them. The atmosphere was not the same as that of Concord and Brook Farm, so much better known abroad, for there religion and philosophy counted for much while in Quincy, where the Adams lived, they counted for nothing. ' The children reached manhood without knowing religion, and with the certainty that dogma, metaphysics, and abstract philosophy were not worth knowing.' That may offer a partial explanation of *Mont-Saint-Michel.*

As a boy Adams enjoyed the society of men who were as distinguished and as cultivated, within these worldly limits, as any who could have been found in the 1850's. As for social position he could not have asked for more ; his grandfather and his great-grandfather had been Presidents of the United States, and his father was to become the American Ambassador in London.

Of himself, speaking in the third person, which is the strange convention followed in the book, he says that he had all the characteristics of the typical New Englander:

> ' the habit of doubt ; of distrusting his own judgment and of totally rejecting the judgment of the world ; the tendency to regard every question as open ; the hesitation to act except as a choice of evils ; the shirking of responsibility ; the love of line, form, quality ; the horror of ennui ; the passion for companionship and the antipathy to society . . . '

Of what one can deduce about his character from the rest of the book, and particularly from the style, his chief qualities seem to have been balance and stability, and a certain fundamental

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toughness of fibre. It is difficult to estimate how much of the pleasure of reading it comes in this way. He was intelligent, and curious, and able to hold the world at arm's length ; but the adjective ' intelligent,' as it has been used heretofore to describe Adams, was somewhat of a *pis aller* ; it is not what is most interesting about him.

With these qualities and these opportunities he led an active life in one capacity or another for about fifteen years after he finished his formal education—with his father in Washington on the eve of the Civil War, and as his secretary in London when he became Ambassador. All his life, of course, he was in a position to meet practically whom he pleased. When he returned to the United States he tried to enter political journalism, but there seemed to be no politics to support ; he then went to Harvard for seven years as professor of history.

His meeting with President Grant, upon his return to Washington, may be taken as a fair example—if it is not too local—of the sort of comment he passed upon this wide range of experience, comment which occupies approximately the first two-thirds of the book.

> ' About no one did opinions differ so widely. Adams had no opinion, or occasion to make one. A single word with Grant satisfied him that, for his own good, the fewer words he risked, the better. Thus far in life he had met with but one man of the same intellectual or unintellectual type—Garibaldi. Of the two, Garibaldi seemed to him a trifle the more intellectual, but, in both, the intellect counted for nothing ; only the energy counted. The type was pre-intellectual, archaic, and would have seemed so even to the cave-dwellers . . .
>
> In time one came to recognize the type in other men, with differences and variations, as normal ; men whose energies were the greater, the less they wasted on thought ; men who sprang from the soil to power ; apt to be distrustful of themselves and others ; shy ; jealous ; sometimes vindictive ; more or less dull in outward appearance ; always needing stimulants ; but for whom action was the highest stimulant—the instinct of fight . . .
>
> What worried Adams was . . . as usual, his own education. Grant fretted and irritated him . . . He had no right to exist. He should have been extinct for ages . . . The progress of

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evolution from President Washington to President Grant, was alone evidence enough to upset Darwin.'

This was indeed the question which Adams was always asking himself: what the matter was with his education, that he never should find a way of fitting himself into the world in some more effective fashion. There never seemed to be any ultimate position of power at the end. The question of who was wrong, Adams' parents or teachers, or the world, or Adams himself, is a subtle one and best left an individual decision. But Adams' own thinking about the world and himself is another matter. After leaving Harvard he retired from all public or active life and studied.

His personal problem has by this time become a common one, even if the scale be different: that of a man more or less cut off from the world through differences in values. Adams had a keen sense of values, as these two books go to show. Nor did he ever give any sign of being willing to compromise or abandon his own. As for the future, he hoped that a type of man would arise who would combine the traditional values with a new knowledge of men and affairs, so that he would be able to act, as Adams had not been able to. It was always a question of knowledge ; it was that which was going to make the new man effective and the world more supportable.

What seems most surprising now is that in his ' formal ' thinking, which occupied the last thirty or more years of his life, he should not have envisaged some kind of moral struggle in society. He did, of course, in a sense: he always said he was willing to support a cause if he could find one worth supporting. He wanted no lost causes, of which he had seen many, and he didn't like hopeless politics. His warning to caution is to be respected ; nor would anyone think of suggesting that he should have adopted some current dogma. Perhaps, then, it would be more just to consider his thinking as prefatory to some ultimate conclusion which would embody a moral issue, a struggle in which the values of a man like Adams could be at stake. The conclusion was never reached, and his theories now may well seem remote and abstract ; but this does not at all detract from one's sympathy for Adams, nor from the fineness nor interest of the greater part of *The Education*.

DONALD S. CULVER.

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MR. AUDEN'S TALENT

LOOK, STRANGER ! Poems by W. H. Auden (Faber and Faber, 5/-).

THE ASCENT OF F.6, by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood (Faber and Faber, 5/-).

' Since the publication of *Poems* in 1930, which immediately marked the author as a leader of a new school of poetry that has since established itself . . . ' Mr. Auden (one may go on, while questioning whether a school that springs up as immediately as the publisher reports is properly to be described as a ' school of poetry ') has certainly been a significant and representative figure, a figure to watch. One has watched him for signs of development. His talent was indubitable ; one has waited for him to begin to do something with it. Those who open *Look, Stranger !* in hope will be once again disappointed—which doesn't make him the less significant and representative.

The talent, an impressive one, is apparent here in the familiar ways. There are those striking and so characteristic phrases and images. For he certainly has a gift for words ; he delights in them and they come. He continues, in a way that would be very promising in a young poet, to be happily in love with expression. But Mr. Auden cannot now be far short of thirty, and he is still without that with which a poet controls words, commands expression, writes poems. He has no organization. He hasn't, at any rate, the organization corresponding to his local vitality, to the distinction of his phrasing and imagery at their best. This lack comes out very obviously, as before, in an embarrassing uncertainty of tone and poise, an uncertainty not the less radical and disquieting for his tendency to make a virtue of it. He no doubt knows that he is writing doggerel in XVIII. But he does the same kind of thing in pieces that beyond any doubt ask to be taken seriously—as seriously as anything he offers asks to be taken.

He is, of course, a satirist, and we know that there is such a thing as irony. But his irony is not the irony of the mature mind—it is self-defensive, self-indulgent or merely irresponsible ; and his satire is fairly represented by his imitation of Burns (XIV) :

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Because you saw but were not indignant
The invasion of the great malignant
Cambridge ulcer
The army intellectual
Of every kind of liberal
Smarmy with friendship but of all
There are none falser.

A host of columbines and pathics
Who show the poor by mathematics
In their defence
That wealth and poverty are merely
Mental pictures, so that clearly
Every tramp's a landlord really
In mind-events.

—Those stanzas might, by themselves, be serious (and they are certainly popular among Cambridge undergraduates). But (not to mention what goes before) they are followed by:

Let fever sweat them till they tremble
Cramp rack their limbs till they resemble
Cartoons by Goya:
Their daughters sterile be in rut,
May cancer rot their herring gut,
The circular madness on them shut,
Or paranoia.

Mr. Auden's irony, in fact, is a matter of his being uncertain whether he is engaged mainly in expressing *sæva indignatio* or in amusing himself and his friends. And there is habitually in him a similar uncertainty.

It is significant that he should in this book borrow the show of a mature poise here from Burns and there from Yeats—see, for instance, III and XXIV. (There are other curious literary reminiscences; among them—though this doesn't illustrate the immediate point—an elaborate echo, in VII, of those sestines from *Arcadia* that Mr. Empson quotes in *Ambiguity*). Since so much of his emotional material and his poetic aura, glamorous or sinister, comes fairly directly from childhood and schooldays, the borrowing can hardly have any other effect on us than that of

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implicit self-diagnosis. For Mr. Auden still makes far too much of his poetry out of private neuroses and memories—still uses these in an essentially immature way. He has, of course, his social preoccupation, and he still habitually makes his far too easy transitions between his private and his public world:

> And since our desire cannot take that route which is straightest,
> Let us choose the crooked, so implicating these acres
> These millions in whom already the wish to be one
> Like a burglar is stealthily moving,
> That these, on the new façade of a bank
> Employed, or conferring at a health resort,
> May, by circumstances linked,
> More clearly act our thought.

The sinister glamour that so often attends his premonitory surveys of the social scene is transferred too directly and too obviously from the nameless terrors of childhood or their neurotic equivalent.

But is what is implied here more properly to be called a public world or a private?—

> The Priory clock chimes briefly and I recollect
> I am expected to return alive
> My will effective and my nerves in order
> To my situation.
> ' The poetry is in the pity,' Wilfred said,
> And Kathy in her journal, ' To be rooted in life,
> That's what I want.'

' Wilfred,' it would seem, is Wilfred Owen, and ' Kathy ' Katherine Mansfield. It is a significant habit that is betrayed in this mode of referring to them.

For corroboration of the surmise that the habits of the group-world are intimately associated with the failure of Mr. Auden's talent to mature we have the new play that he has written with Christopher Isherwood. The talent, the striking gift of expression, appears in the opening soliloquy of Michael Ransom, and here and there in other places. But more generally it is Mr. Eliot's gifts that we are aware of, for the play is heavily parasitic upon both the Eliot of *Sweeney Agonistes* and the Eliot of the Choruses. But the hero, Michael Ransom, is not one who can

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be brought into any comfortable relation with any manner of Mr. Eliot's. Ransom says (' *smiling* ') to one of his group (the dialogue is in the authors' own style): ' You haven't changed much have you, Ian, since you were head Prefect and Captain of the First Fifteen?' Ian might have retorted in much the same formula. They have none of them, in fact, in Ransom's group, changed much since they were at school— at their Public School. And it is clearly assumed that the audience will not have changed much either. For we are unmistakably expected to feel towards the school hero (the school, of course, being of the class in which mountaineering is a normal interest) the respect and awe felt by his school-fellow followers. How seriously we are to take him we may gather from the Abbot of the Great Glacier who, offering him a place in the Monastery as one of the élite of the earth (Ransom has studied the Book of the Dead) speaks of ' your powers and your intelligence.'

But powers and intelligence cannot be injected into the drama by the mystico-psychological hocus-pocus of the Monastery and of the death-scene. There can be no significance in the drama that is not active in the dramatist's words. Well, the realistic dialogue of *The Ascent of F.6* is simply and unironically Public School, and for the lift into verse we have:

> I have no purpose but to see you happy,
> And do you find that so remarkable?
> What mother could deny it and be honest?
> . . . . . .
> May not a mother come at once to bring
> Her only gift, her love? When the news came
> I was in bed, for lately
> I've not been very well. But what's a headache
> When I can stand beside my son and see him
> In the hour of his triumph?

That is the Tennysonian pathetic.[1] And Ransom at the moment

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[1] *Cf.*

> I would you had a son!
> It might be easier then for you to make
> Allowance for a mother—her—who comes
> To rob you of your one delight on earth.

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of high tragic realization breaks into the solemn Shakespearian parody of this:

> O senseless hurricanes,
> That waste yourselves upon the unvexed rock,
> Find some employment proper to your powers,
> Press on the neck of Man your murdering thumbs
> And earn real gratitude! Astrologers,
> Can you not scold the fated loitering star
> To run to its collision and our end?
> The Church and Chapel can agree in this,
> The vagrant and the widow mumble for it
> And those with millions belch their heavy prayers
> To take away this luggage. Let the ape buy it
> Or the insipid hen. Is Death so busy
> That we must fidget in a draughty world
> That's stale and tasteless ; must we still kick our heels
> And wait for his obsequious secretaries
> To page Mankind at last and lead him
> To the distinguished Presence?

It was necessary, in order to make the point, to suggest effectively both the pretensions and the kind of badness of this play. That kind of badness, when a writer of Mr. Auden's gifts is led into it, implies not only a complete absence of exposure to criticism, but also a confident awareness of an encouraging audience. In other words, the present is the time when the young talent needs as never before the support of the group, and when the group can, as never before, escape all contact with serious critical standards. In such a time it often seems a hopeless undertaking to promote by criticism the needed critical stir.

F. R. LEAVIS.

> How often has my sick boy yearned for this!
> I have put him off as often ; but to-day
> I dared not—so much weaker, so much worse
> For last day's journey.

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THE PRINCIPLES OF SHAKESPEARIAN PRODUCTION, by G. Wilson Knight (Faber and Faber, 10/6).

There is some sound sense in this book ; but you have to grub for it, because Mr. Knight's theories about Shakespeare, which have now become the support of a complete system of metaphysics, obscure everything, and the book seems an unweeded garden that grows, not to seed, but to a vast and worthless expanse of indigestible vegetable growth that Mr. Knight somehow offers up to Christianity, like the prize pumpkin at Harvest Festival. He discusses, for example, his idea of the play as a unity, an ' extended metaphor '—an idea which, he rightly argues, should be the foundation of all production—and finishes his discussion by saying that ' in *Pericles* you must give somewhat the same sort of assent to the miraculous resurrection of Thaisa as you would to the raising of Lazarus in the New Testament.' In a note he add, ' The difficult matter of the extra degree of reality of the New Testament over the Shakespearian play I have discussed in *The Christian Renaissance*, chs. iii, iv.'

Now I have not read the work referred to. Moreover it may be argued that all I have done so far is to exhibit a prejudice against some of Mr. Knight's views, that after all these views may not be relevant, and that Mr. Knight is at any rate a stimulating writer and a man of taste and intelligence. But what is one to make of a statement like this? Speaking Shakespeare's verse, he says, ' demands intellectual study . . . it is as difficult as golf ' ; the handkerchief in *Othello* is a domestic symbol, and ' The carpet in *Hassan* might be called " domestic " too . . . We can observe that textile fabrics are naturally apt to oriental plays: hence again these dominant symbols, the carpet and the handkerchief, in *Hassan* and *Othello* ' ; Hamlet's speeches over Ophelia's body ' are exactly on a par with Stanhope's " Do you think I don't care?" in *Journey's End*. Hamlet is a giant in spiritual stature.' It seems to me that Mr. Knight's methods have got completely out of control. His criticism has deteriorated, and I believe the deterioration is due to the fact that in his work ethical and philosophical sanctions have replaced æsthetic ones. How else can one account for his belief that the whole of *Henry VIII* is by Shakespeare, and that Cranmer's prophecy is ' indeed Shakespeare's last word to the world '?

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Mr. Knight is at his best when he is saying what he does not like about the modern stage. He hates realistic scenery ; better still, he hates sets that make pretty pictures on their own account ; and best of all, he hates the modern stage electrician. ' The old style realism ' he says, ' reduced poetic drama to the level of our normal waking consciousness ; modern lighting drags it lower to a sub-human world of twilit dream.' He insists that the actors' faces must be seen, because ' lighting is crassly mechanical compared with the finesse of vocal or facial expression ' ; and he very shrewdly observes that actors won't bother to act in the dark, anyway. He wants all sets to be simple, solid, and so arranged as to allow the play to be performed rapidly and fluently, and all stage objects, he says, ' should appear weighty and solid.'

He is not, it seems to me, so good when he is talking about the technique of acting. Most readers of his book will, I suppose, be amateurs, who have little if any technical training, and will have to rely on their feelings and their common sense ; and it seems rather pointless to tell them that ' a loglike body does not look so significantly dead as one with limbs more artistically deployed ' ; or, ' One need not always kneel down stage.' If the producer of Shakespeare hasn't enough sense to look after this sort of thing himself, reading books won't help him, and he'd better give up production.

The producers would, I think, find a good deal worth consideration in the sample productions which Mr. Knight discusses in detail. The principle of searching for the vital, unifying theme of the play, and of using the production to communicate this, seems to me absolutely sound. I disagree violently with a good deal of what Mr. Knight says, because I think his work is vitiated by the ideas I have already mentioned, and which have already been discussed in *Scrutiny* (Vol. II. No. 2) in the review of *The Christian Renaissance*. I particularly dislike his set for *Macbeth* with a throne on one side and a Madonna and child on the other—a symbolism, it seems to me, as crude as it is unwieldy and fallacious. The producer cannot get into his production all the complexities he feels in the play, and it would be fatal for him to attempt it. He must allow the theatrical elements of the play free scope. Play Shakespeare simply, play him fast, and speak the verse as poetry should be spoken (if you know how) and he will see that the audience understand him as far as in them lies.

T. R. BARNES.

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YEATS AND THE IRISH MOVEMENT

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ, by W. B. Yeats (Macmillan, 8/6).

In *Autobiographies* Yeats closed his narrative with an account of his meeting with Lady Gregory and the discussions which led to the foundation of an Irish theatre. *Dramatis Personæ, 1896-1902*, and the other meditations collected in this book deal mainly with the launching and early history of the movement. As such they are no doubt extremely valuable to the literary historian. But the attempt of Yeats and his associates, interesting as it must be as a phase of Irish literature, is of special interest as being, in intention at least, that 'desperate undertaking . . . to revive or replace a decayed tradition' which was mentioned in one of the earliest statements of the aims of *Scrutiny*.

Whereas his English friends had to confine themselves to deploring comment on the trend of civilization—the Rhymers we remember claimed to stand for culture and tradition—and to withdrawal into their dream worlds, Yeats himself was fortunate enough to have been brought up in Sligo and to have been possessed with the hope of building on that peasant foundation a cultured life for Ireland. In the course of his attempt he was faced with the inevitable temptations and difficulties of such a venture; the temptation to indulge in the immediate business of politics, the difficulty of infusing into a town civilization in which the lower middle classes were the most powerful the traditions of the peasant.

From the first he saw that it must be a literary movement, and his first business was to attack the sentimental political verse of 'Young Ireland,' to secure recognition for the genuinely traditional writers such as Ferguson and Mangan, and because the Irish public was not a reading public, to found a theatre, to work for the establishment of a centre of authority. But it was not merely a literary movement; as he so finely perceived,

> 'No art can conquer the people alone—the people are conquered by an ideal of life upheld by authority. As this ideal is rediscovered, the arts, music and poetry, painting and literature, will draw closer together.'

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Because this book is a record of a sensitive intelligence in action—admirable alike in the treatment of the inevitable particular problems and in the formulation of general principles—it deserves to be studied by all who hope for similar things in England.

But Yeats as we know now was not to prove a great dramatist but a great poet. Yet while the disturbances caused by his theatre brought him notoriety—the book fittingly closes with his address to the Swedish Academy on his receiving the Nobel Prize—his poetry seemed to be withering away. We know from Moore that Dubliners held inquests over him and were not altogether sorry to record his poetical demise. Yeats himself was bringing out a final Collected Edition of his works. The extracts from his diaries here printed record his alarm over the effect his public work was having on his poetry. A further reason for the unfruitfulness of this period of his poetical career was the lack of public appreciation. The public for his lyric poetry seemed to him a mere handful. He records that he never made more than £200 a year by his writing until he was past fifty.

Dramatis Personæ, 1896-1902, marks the extreme advance in the exfoliation of his style. The run of the sentences is closer than ever to ' the active man speaking.' If we compare passages which repeat incidents already handled in earlier works we note a sharper recording. There are less phrases which sound like pale echoes of his verse. His vocabulary is less exclusive. Illustration by extracts is almost impossible. A random sentence will perhaps indicate the change. ' Moore's body was insinuating, upflowing, circulative, curvicular, pop-eyed.' The self-criticism so striking in *Autobiographies* is here also at work. But here his detachment is perhaps too great. It has led to a lack of sympathy with his earlier self. This episode is in no way as vivid as any of the sections of the earlier book. Nor is it adequately ' placed ' ; there does not emerge a sense of the period as a whole. On the other hand the individuals who figured prominently in the Dublin of the period are clearly and on the whole justly portrayed. His sketch of George Moore is a masterpiece. However, the extracts from a diary of 1909 which follow are more impressive. They furnish further evidence of the critical work that went to the making of the poems in the *Green Helmet and other poems* published in 1910.

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There runs through this, as through all the work of Yeats, that exasperating insistence on what may roughly be called magic. It is difficult to believe that Yeats still thinks that the 'wisdom' which he wished to recover for the regeneration of Ireland is to be found in the world of faery he noted among the Irish peasants. But though the extravagant claims made in his early poems were toned down in later editions (the poem *To Ireland in the coming times* in 1892 contained the following lines:

> My rhymes more than their rhyming tell
> Of the dim visions old and deep
> That God gives unto man in sleep

which are altered in *Early Poems and Stories* 1925 to

> Of things discovered in the deep
> Where only body's laid asleep.)

we find Yeats in this book repeating the earlier language. 'We are going to change the thought of the world, I say, to bring it back to all its old truths . . . ' In spite of this, as is apparent from his poems his narrow preoccupations have widened immensely. His understanding of the essentials of civilization has been strengthened by his awakening to the eighteenth century. As a result he says some admirable things of the value of inherited culture. Yet whatever be the advantage of his magical speculations —and they seem at moments to border on mere superstition (on p. 135 we find: 'Last night my sister told me that this book of Synge's was the only book they began to print on a Friday. They tried to avoid this but could not, and it is not at all well printed. Do all they could, it would not come right')—for his personal development and for merely poetical purposes—though even here they seem to have led him astray—insistence on them as a necessity for a national movement is hardly likely to prove any more helpful than Eliot's claims for the Anglican church.

H. A. Mason.

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READING THE SPIRIT, by Richard Eberhart (Chatto and Windus, 6/-).

All that Mr. Eberhart has in common with the young talents who made their début at much the same time (I first met with him in *Cambridge Poetry 1929*, where William Empson appeared—Auden and Bottrall were getting going about then) is that he has been disappointing in development. But it is pleasant to be reminded that he has, after all, produced what is, comparatively, a very respectable sheaf of memorable work—for besides what the new book contains there is *A Bravery of Earth*, a fair proportion of which is good Eberhart.

> Where are those high and haunting skies,
> Higher than the see-through wind? Where are
> The rocky springs beyond desire? And where
> The sudden source of purity?
>
> Now they are gone again. Though world
> Decrease the wraith-like eye so holy,
> And bring a summer in, and with it folly,
> Though the senses bless and quell,
>
> I would not with such blessings be beguiled,
> But seek an image far more dear. O where
> Has gone that madness wild? Where strays
> The abrupt essence and the final shield?

—That, to judge by its position, is fairly recent work, but it is unmistakably by the poet of those early poems which struck one so with their idiosyncrasy a long half-dozen years ago. If one thought of Blake it was perhaps because Eberhart, if a 'romantic,' was so unlike Shelley. It was also, no doubt, because of the peculiarly individual quality of that sensibility, the definition of which, in his strange rhythms and elusive prose-sense, is so sharp: see, for instance, *Request for Offering, Necessity* and *Caravan of Silence*.

He had none of the cerebration and wit then beginning to be cultivated by young poets. Later alas he entered into rivalry, and we have verse that is difficult in a different way from his best and characteristic: *Dissertation by Waxlight*, for instance, aims at the

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Metaphysical. And much of the later verse that can only be said to be in manners of his own seems to me unsatisfactory too. The sharp definition is not there:

Death is indescribably much on me

—there is too much that seems to go with that sort of random shot.

One of the finest poems in the book is the Shakespearian piece, *The Return of Odysseus*, that appeared first in *Scrutiny*.

F.R.L.

THE READING AND WRITING OF ENGLISH, by E. G. Biaggini (Hutchinson, 4/6).

It is doubtful if many teachers discovered Mr. Biaggini's *English in Australia*. It was not widely advertised or reviewed, and the title did not hint that it was likely to be useful as a class-book. It was, primarily, a sociological enquiry, but the experiments on which the enquiry was based were exercises in practical criticism which could be used profitably in any English school. In the present book, he has used these experiments and their results to point the way to a simple method of training taste.

The method is roughly (it was devised by Mr. Biaggini independently) that of Dr. Richards's *Practical Criticism*. Papers were distributed containing passages for comparison, the students being asked to state a definite preference. The resulting opinions contained all the arguments for or against the passages, and so gave the author an opportunity to examine the usual approaches of the ordinary person when asked for an individual judgment, to point out which of these approaches are relevant, and to analyse the passages, stating his own conclusions. By answering irrelevant objections and emphasising sound arguments, he shows the pupil the correct way in which to approach literature—to concentrate always on the value of the word.

Mr. Biaggini is, as can be seen from the nature of his original experiment, very much alive to the importance of intelligent reading and writing, and the study of English generally, and realizes that

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the present state of culture is largely due to ignorance of, and disregard for, those common sense qualities which he seeks to emphasize. What is even more important is that he sees clearly what he wants to do and how to do it. The book is intended for school use, and Mr. Biaggini realizes, very wisely, that it is no use starting off by expecting schoolchildren to distinguish first-class from mediocre—the first step must be to distinguish sense from non-sense, and his results show that ability to do this is not a common achievement. So he contrasts a hack journalist with Cobbett, Wilhelmina Stitch with Edward Thomas, a spoof speech from *Elmer Gantry* with Bunyan. If anyone considers these comparisons childishly simple, let him look at the tables of results, which include not only schoolchildren but third-year University English students, and notice how often the wrong choice is made, and then at the protocols, and see the appallingly ingenuous arguments used to defend that choice. Then, let him remember that teaching is not merely a matter of starting at the beginning, but of continually returning to the beginning to make sure that we're still on the right track, and haven't forgotten where we started from. Mr. Biaggini has kept this fact in mind ; obviously, he had to.

Some minor objections might be made to his choice of passages: it would be fairly easy to make out a case against the Baldwin passage that he gives as an example of sincerity and plainness. But the passage is not actually bad, and the second-rate must play an important part in anyone's development. Again, the section on the writing of English is rather disappointing, and has the air of an afterthought. What it says is sound enough, but it doesn't say much. I have never yet found a book which is really helpful in teaching others to write and I think Mr. Biaggini realizes the difficulties.

I do, however, recommend the book thoroughly to all English teachers who realize the importance of training taste, and don't quite know where to begin. The book is practical and is seldom likely to be above the heads of a senior form—say 14 onwards. It is written by a man who knows the immense difficulties of teaching, and who has not been discouraged by them, or turned to an easy-going acquiescence.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

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PROPAGANDA AND THE NEWS, by Will Irwin (McGraw-Hill, 12/6).

Much of the material in this book is available elsewhere, and nothing new arises from its collocation here: but under present conditions such matter can hardly be reprinted too often. The author is an American journalist of long experience. This gave him the chance of being behind the scenes when dirty work was going on during the war and after, but it hasn't provided him with the detachment and standards which would have helped him to draw conclusions from his interesting evidence. Apart from the title, the book reads like a history of journalism with special reference to America and the war and post war periods. Mr. Irwin traces the growth of the press and its acquisition of liberty in a rather Told-through-the-ages manner, and gives a good account of one Bennett, who seems to have been an early American prototype of Northcliffe. He invented the interview, and exploited 'human interest' as early as 1835: 'a super-reporter he remained to the end of his days. Only in his later years did he become interested in changing the trend of public affairs. At first dimly, then more clearly as he gathered confidence, he perceived that journalism had left to private gossip a hundred interesting aspects of life . . .' Competition caused his methods to be followed in America, and eventually in England.

But except for the war-period, there is not much information about the extent to which news is influenced by propaganda, conscious or unwitting. He states for instance on p. 35 that in English journalism 'there arose a tradition which, however commendable in some respects, amounted to another brake on the press. Always the newspapers must play the game of the Foreign Office. Always they must tune the news to the diplomatic necessities of the moment. There is little compulsion about the process—simply an unofficial social sanction.' There is some very interesting evidence of that relation, and it is a pity Mr. Irwin did not avail himself of it.

The chapters on government propaganda during the war are useful. Here the Germans were pioneers. In the west they tried to create distrust of Great Britain in the French mind, and in the east to disintegrate imperialist Russia by propaganding discontented elements. Many of the Jews in Germany who have suffered from the Nazis must have been attracted into the country by appeals

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to the Polish Jews to throw off the Russian oppressor ; one of the leaflets dropped from airplanes was signed by Erich von Ludendorff, a consistent Jew-baiter. In the occupied territory of Northern France they tried to disseminate German ideas and the defeatist spirit by pamphlets and a regular newspaper. When checked and in fear of defeat and anxious for a negotiated peace, the Germans tried to use a Socialist conference at Stockholm as propaganda for the idea of peace ; but it came to nothing as the Allies refused passports to the socialists of their own countries. However, according to Mr. Irwin, they did succeed by means of defeatist propaganda in producing a wave of low morale which ' paralyzed French military initiative for more than three months.'

German propaganda was on the whole a good deal clumsier than that of the Allies—to whom in one instance they supplied very welcome matter. Most of the atrocities at the beginning of the war were the result of the General Staff's policy of ' initial severity,' and not of irresponsible individual action—except for these orders, the invading army seems to have behaved comparatively well.

The propaganda of the Allies was most successful during the last year of the war, when they were beginning to meet with some military success. They induced Germans to desert by offers of good food, began to detach Jugoslav and Czech support, and in Germany spread the news of Allied successes and American strength. Finally, ' they injected strong hints that the Kaiser and his clique had deceived the German people and forfeited the right to rule. And Germany . . . might obtain easier terms if she abandoned the war at this present stage.' Mr. Irwin says that the Allies expected complete victory by June, 1919, and that their propagandists shortened the war by six or seven months. And of course at the Versailles Conference ' the larger nations had transformed their departments of war propaganda into departments of peace propaganda. Before the delegates ran a line of skirmishers—agents of super-publicity, eminent directing journalists who showered flattering attentions on the representatives of the foreign press, humbler figures with engaging personalities. These expounders of national aims took the reporters ostentatiously into their confidence in both daily conferences and private meetings ; and they put forth a deluge of mimeographed matter.'

If the book had been English one would have expected some

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account of that aspect of propaganda which is of most concern at the moment—the press campaign for armaments and dictators. Pacifists must consider what can be done to counter this campaign, how if at all they can compete with the methods of the gutter press—whether, for example, the fear of invasion, conquest and so on can be replaced by the fear of a finally destructive war. But this may sound too much like trying to do evil that good may come ; and anyhow the pacifically inclined have no means of putting their views before Rothermere's readers. Rather than try to correct the *Mail* and *Express* propaganda directly they may be better employed in securing cohesion among such pacific forces as there are, and in making their own weight felt with governments. Mr. Irwin records that ' in the early days of Christian Science, the newspapers were critical of instances where the sick died under the treatment of a healer. The new sect thereupon organized a committee to stimulate floods of protesting letters. This policy, continued year after year, stopped all criticism.'

Mr. D. W. Harding has observed that it is useless to warn ' people against any particular kind of propaganda stunt.' Yet it may still be helpful, if only to individuals, to familiarize people, where there is opportunity, as in schools, with recurrent types of propaganda. The atrocity-mongering of the English press during the Spanish civil war closely resembles that of the last war. And one may anticipate what propaganda for war is potential in the situation from day to day, though so far as effect on other people is concerned that may be no more than a private indulgence. ' Preserve the people's front ' seems a possible war cry, especially if British imperialists instead of toadying to fascism recognize in it a menace to their own interests. Such considerations as the impossibility of limiting a war in character or extent and the probability that the next war ' will end civilization ' are reasonable and have secured a wide currency, due in part to pacifist propaganda. Insistence on them and especially their implications is salutary. They serve also as a kind of shibboleth to test the genuineness of pacific aspirations. The Communist party for example says firmly that it is ' against war '—but according to its literature this only refers to a ' capitalist ' or ' imperialist ' war. Given a suitable formula, Mr. Pollitt and Mr. Churchill may yet be seen on the same recruiting platform, inviting us to ' break the Fascist Front,' or even again to make the world safe for democracy.

DENYS THOMPSON.

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PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, by William McDougall (Methuen, 1936, 7/6 net).

Here is a glimpse of the darker side of academic life. Professor McDougall's theme is that as Freudian psychology abandons its errors it will become more and more like the system which McDougall formulated in 1908. True, it will contribute a fuller understanding of subconscious activities, but in all its fundamental conceptions, except those that are wrong, it merely reflects McDougall's views without admitting the resemblance. 'I have realized too late,' he says, 'that I might have done much more for my chosen science, had I from the first spoken with a less modest voice. It seems to me probable that, had I at the outset put forward my views in a more self-assertive and clamant fashion, I might have been acknowledged as the leader of a powerful and perhaps dominant school of psychology ; instead of remaining a well-nigh solitary outsider playing a lone hand ; I might even have "put over" the type of psychology which I believe to be most nearly true, and to be indispensable for the advance of all the social sciences. For, in psychology, far more than in any other field of science, the prestige and authority of a like-minded group would seem to be essential to the success of any theory or system.' The 'success' of a theory. But in the academic world there is nothing unusual in this dual role of scientist and politician, nor in the resulting embitterment.

Many will agree with the matter if not the manner of Professor McDougall's criticism of the Freudian system, and many will agree with his estimate of the importance of what he and Freud have in common. But he admits that before the two systems can come together the Freudian system must admit four or five more instinctual dispositions than it does at present, and must abandon, amongst other errors, 'the reality-principle, the pleasure-principle, the *libido* theory with its two radically different kinds of energy, the death-instinct, the over-emphasis on sex, strict determinism.' Left with an admitted gulf of this extent one feels that Professor McDougall should have been content to argue the truth of his own views and the wrongness of Freud's. His attempt to exhibit Freudian psychology as an unconfessing tributary of the dominant empire he has been denied seems to pertain to the trivialities of professionalism.

D.W.H.

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FINE WRITING

REPERUSALS AND RE-COLLECTIONS, by Logan Pearsall Smith (Constable, 12/6).

For Mr. Smith, criticism is an amusement *pour distraire les honnêtes gens*. He describes this book as ' mainly the results of re-reading and reconsidering certain books which have been my favourites during that life spent (or mis-spent) in miscellaneous reading which has proved for me so pleasant a scheme of existence.' ' Or mis-spent ' is presumably a delicately ironic thrust at the Philistine, but irony of this kind soon becomes equivocal, and often looks like a cultivated irresponsibility. And the impression left by these essays is that the writer considers it puritanical, and somewhat ill-bred, to take criticism or literature seriously.

The essay on *Fine Writing*, originally Tract XLVI of the Society for Pure English, is in effect, if not in intention, an attempt to justify the ' creative ' method of the rest of the book ; it may appropriately, therefore, be considered first. Mr. Smith attacks Mr. Herbert Read, Mr. Middleton Murry, and ' the flourishing school of Cambridge criticism ' (this fictitious body seems to cause considerable bother outside Cambridge) for their warnings against the conscious cultivation of Style. His arguments are: that the pursuit of perfection (a Platonic idea of Style laid up in heaven?) is not reprehensible ; that journalist critics disapprove of fine writing (not *journalist* critics, surely?) because it never sells well (*e.g.* the early Tennyson and Arnold, Bridges, Fitzgerald, Lamb, Pater, Doughty, Hopkins and Henry James) ; that Mr. Lucas need not have attacked Flaubert because Cambridge has not produced many stylists ; that the natural and spontaneous style recommended by the ' young writers ' has ' no formal beauty, no elegance, no balance, no trace of the deliberation of art ' (Lytton Strachey) ; that words have a power to create their meaning, and the meaning lies partly in the expression ; that there is no rigid distinction between poetry and prose, while prose has possibilities of expression which verse cannot easily surpass (the examples include purple passages of Landor, Sterne, Carlyle, Burton, Lamb and Ruskin). Only the last two arguments seem to need any comment. Coleridge, it is true, said ' The vividness of the descriptions or declamations in Donne or Dryden, is as much and as often derived from the

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force and fervour of the describer, as from the reflections, forms or incidents, which constitute their subject and materials. The wheels take fire from the mere rapidity of their motion.' Mr. Smith's equivalent example is Bridges: plainly there is a fundamental difference of meaning. The point is that whatever the stimulus to production, or the method, the finished work will betray to the examination of the critic whether or not it communicates to the reader any valuable experience or attitude. If one objects to the style of Lamb, Carlyle, Ruskin, Landor or Pater, it is because one does not consider that the author had anything valuable to say: if one's admiration for Browne and Jeremy Taylor is qualified, it is where imaginative rhetoric becomes hollow booming, not expressive of genuine feeling, where profusion of imagery becomes mere floridity, not 'modified by a predominant passion.' The objection to Fine Writing is an objection to pretentiousness, to the self-conscious elaboration of a manner which is not the genuine expression of an interesting sensibility. The method chosen by the practitioner must of course be governed by his purposes: a glance at *To the Lighthouse* or the opening paragraph of *The Rainbow*, or the description of Stephen's walk on the beach in *Ulysses* would have shown Mr. Smith that imaginative prose is by no means 'out of fashion' where it is appropriate. The fact remains that the normal method of prose is less concentrated, more cumulative, than that of verse, and that wherever lucidity and precision are important, particularly in literary criticism, where precise analysis is needed, any conscious heightening of style leads almost inevitably to vagueness and falsity. Exceptions like Coleridge's illuminating extended similes are rare.

It is really Mr. Smith's own critical standards that are in question, and the rest of the book is not reassuring. The long essays on *Donne's Sermons*, *Jeremy Taylor*, and *English Aphorists* are respectable and diffuse academic introductions to books of selections. The essays on Montaigne, Madame de Sévigné. *Pilgrimages*, *The Rembrandt of English Prose* (Carlyle), *Captain Shandon*, and so on, are in the line of Mrs. Woolf and Lytton Strachey, 'amusing' re-creations of personalities and periods. Sainte-Beuve is praised for his portraits—'in what good company we find ourselves!' The essay *On Re-Reading Pater* notes 'how

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well his writing has stood the test of time,' and speaks of his disciples retaining 'some glaze of the soul from the contact of that flame, some traces of delicate gilding not quite rubbed away.' The lyric intensity of the work of 'Michael Field' is illustrated by some extraordinarily unconvincing examples, and *Altamura* (1898) is an interesting period piece.

This last essay adds to conscious Style belletristic wit:

> 'Every now and then, when the earth has swung a billion miles or so round the ellipsis of its orbit, I sit down upon this unsteady planet and read through all Jane Austen's novels.'

And so he leaves us, 'whirled through space upon this planet, reading, reading, round the sun.'

R. G. Cox.

ADDITIONS TO 'EVERYMAN'

Cakes and Ale, by Somerset Maugham, has been courageously issued by Messrs. Dent in the Everyman Series, thus putting it on the footing of a classic. The new Everyman has shed gilt-back decorations and the other features that made a row of them look depressingly like schoolbooks, and appears in an agreeably plain stout binding. Another good addition to the modern Everyman novels is *The White Peacock*, though one would rather have had Lawrence represented by one of his mature novels. It would be an excellent idea to put his *Studies in Classic American Literature* into the series too.

REVALUATION

REVALUATION: TRADITION AND DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH POETRY, by F. R. Leavis (Chatto and Windus, 7/6).

This book contains about seventy pages of fresh matter in addition to what has appeared in *Scrutiny*. The added matter is mainly in the form of Notes at the end of the chapters; *e.g.*, *Pope's Satiric Modes, Byron's Satire, Arnold, Wordsworth and the Georgians.*

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